IEEM
Sterne, Laurence

James Phillips

THE

SERMONS

OF

Mr YORICK.

VOL. II.

THE

SERMONS

OF

LAURENCE STERNE, A. M.

PREBENDARY OF YORK, VICAR OF SUTTON ON THE FOREST, AND OF STILLINGTON NEAR YORK.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. BUCKLAND AND G. KEITH;
AND SOLD AT EDINBURGH BY
J. FAIRBAIRN AND ARCH. CONSTABLE.

1796.

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SERMON XXII.

THE HISTORY OF JACOB CONSIDERED.

GENESIS xlvii. 9.—*And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years:—few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.*—

THERE is not a man in hiſtory, whom I pity more, than the man who made this reply;—not becauſe his days were ſhort—but that they were long enough to have crowded into them ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy; for, bating the ſeven years he ſerved Laban for Rachel, "*which ſeemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her,*"—ſtrike thoſe out of the number,—all his other days were ſorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you will ſay, from the ſame quarter:—it is true;—but ſtill, in ſome mens lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery;—one evil ſo riſes out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe, from his firſt ſetting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of ſuch different ſcenes:—he was told by Iſaac his father, that "God "ſhould bleſs him with the dew of heaven, "and the fatneſs of the earth, and with "plenty of corn and wine:—that people "were to ſerve him, and nations to bow down "to him:—that he ſhould be lord over his "brethren:—that bleſſed was every one that "bleſſed him, and curſed was every one who "curſed him."

The ſimplicity of youth takes promiſes of happineſs in the fulleſt latitude;—and as theſe were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,—it would leave no diſtruſt of their accompliſhment upon his mind;—every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing;—he would purſue it—he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were, in a great meaſure, ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth:—for in fact, in the ſtrict

and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,—Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy man, that, in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectations, we find from his own pathetic remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven days journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead.—I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

"Theſe twenty years that I have been "with thee,—thy ewes have not caſt their "young, and the rams of thy flock have I "not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts, "I brought not unto thee,—I bare the loſs "of it; what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen "by night, of my hands didſt thou require "it. Thus I was:—in the day the drought "conſumed me, and the froſt by night, and "my ſleep departed from my eyes. Thus "have I been twenty years in thy houſe:—"I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two

" daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle ; " and thou haſt changed my wages ten " times."

Scarce had he recovered from theſe evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children, wound his ſoul to death.—Reuben proves inceſtuous,—Judah adulterous,—his daughter Dinah is diſhonoured,—Simeon and Levi diſhonour themſelves by treachery,—two of his grandchildren are ſtricken with ſudden death, —Rachel, his beloved wife, periſhes, and in circumſtances which embittered his loſs,—his ſon Joſeph, a moſt promiſing youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren ; and, to cloſe all, himſelf driven by famine, in his old age, to die amongſt the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch !—well might he ſay, *That few and evil had been his days*. The anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's inquiry, which was ſimply his age ;—but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them ?—All that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others ;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered :—a ſhattered

fortune—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them ourſelves, paſs naturally enough into the habit, and, by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity:—but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—the avarice of a parent—the unkindneſs of a relation—the ingratitude of a child,—they are evils which leave a ſcar;—beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any,—every looker on has an intereſt in the tragedy;—but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe, than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon farther:—in a word—we realize nothing;—we ſigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,—parental partiality—or parental injuſtice,—it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed—it is that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt, and an eternal terror with it in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of them both in one day:—and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained—there will daggers ever be plant-

ed; "the ſon ſhall literally be ſet at variance "againſt his father, and the daughter againſt "her mother, and the daughter-in-law a- "gainſt her mother-in-law—and a man's foes "ſhall be they of his own houſehold."

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtic policy, as of equity, which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

"If a man have two wives, one beloved "and one hated, and they have born him "children, both the beloved and the hated, "and if the firſt-born ſon be hers that was "hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh "his ſons to inherit that which he hath, that "he may not make the ſon of the beloved "firſt born, before the ſon of the hated, "which is indeed the firſt born,—but he ſhall "acknowledge the ſon of the hated for firſt "born, by giving him a double portion of all "that he hath." The evil was well fenced againſt—for it is one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;—but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike—and, Why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad.—What will it do, then, to

a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itſelf neglected,—too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs, to complain?—See, it ſits down in ſilence; robbed, by diſcouragements, of all its natural powers to pleaſe;—born to ſee others loaded with careſſes—in ſome uncheery corner, it nouriſhes its diſcontent,—and, with a weight upon its ſpirits which its little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand—it droops and pines away—Sad victim of caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom, which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him: ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrows ſufficient on that ſcore, to have taken warning: and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child, in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhown to him, in hers; —"for Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his "children, becauſe he was the ſon of his old "age; and he made him a coat of many co-"lours."—O Iſrael! Where was that prophetic ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate—Where was it fled—that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colours* ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes?—and,

why is every thing?—but that it pleaſes heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of its recompence.—

—Grant me, gracious GOD! to go cheerfully on, the road which thou haſt marked out—I wiſh it neither more wide or more ſmooth:—continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:—I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt track I can with it—and, having done that, I will truſt myſelf, and the iſſue of my journey, to Thee, who art the fountain of joy,—and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life—the impoſition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargained for, or loved. "—And it came to "paſs in the morning, behold it was Leah! "and he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that "thou haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve "thee for Rachel? Wherefore then haſt "thou beguiled me?"

This, indeed, is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,—but the moral of it is ſtill good; and the abuſe, with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as art and artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage:—collect all their

complaints,—hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—"They were miſtaken in the perſon."—Some diſguiſe, either of body or mind, is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtick ſcuffle:—ſome fair ornament—perhaps the very one which won the heart,—*the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit*, falls off:—*It is not the Rachel for whom I have ſerved—Why haſt thou then beguiled me?*

Be open—be honeſt: give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing,—varniſh nothing;—and if theſe fair weapons will not do,—better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day: when the night is paſſed, it will ever be the ſame ſtory—*And it came to paſs, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of fleſh and blood:—when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether it is Rachel or Leah;—be the object what it will, as it muſt be on the earthly ſide, at leaſt, of perfection, it will fall ſhort of the work of fancy, whoſe exiſtence is in the clouds.

In ſuch caſes of deception, let no man exclaim, as Jacob does in his,—*What is it thou haſt done unto me?*—for it is his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiſcretion of his paſſions.

I know not whether it is of any uſe, to take notice of this ſingularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another. *Art thou my very ſon Eſau? and he ſaid, I am.* It is doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the ſame teſt,—but both ſuffered from a ſimilitude of ſtratagem; and it is hard to ſay, whether the anguiſh, from croſſed love, in the breaſt of one brother, might not be as ſore a puniſhment as the diſquietudes of croſſed ambition and revenge in the breaſt of the other.

I do not ſee which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,—or, why a man ſhould fall into that very pit (and no other) which he has *graven and digged for another man.* Time and chance may bring ſuch incidents about; and there wants nothing, but that Jacob ſhould have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for ſuch a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the beſt way to eſcape evil, is, in general, not to commit it ourſelves—and that, whenever the paſſions of mankind will order it otherwiſe, to rob thoſe, at leaſt, *who love judgment*, of the triumph of finding it out—*that our travail has re-*

turned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without returning firſt to the part with which it ſet out,—the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the ſhortneſs and miſery of his days.—Give me leave to bring this home to us, by a ſingle reflection upon each.

There is ſomething ſtrange in it, that life ſhould appear ſo ſhort *in the groſs*—and yet ſo long *in the detail.* Miſery may make it ſo, you will ſay—but we will exclude it;—and ſtill you will find, though we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life, what numbers there are who ſeem quite overſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the highways and ſtreets of the city, to compel gueſts to come in, and take it off their hands. To do this with ingenuity and forecaſt, is not one of the leaſt arts and buſineſſes of life itſelf; and they, who cannot ſucceed in it, carry as many marks of diſtreſs about them, as bankruptcy herſelf could wear. Be as careleſs as we may, we ſhall not always have the power,—nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cooled, and the ſpirits which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;—then wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard,—afflictions, or a bed of ſickneſs, will find their hours of pen-

ſuaſion;—and, ſhould they fail,—there is ſomething yet behind,—old age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its trembling hand hold up the glaſs to us, as it did unto the patriarch.—

—Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians! wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now;—look back;—behold this fair ſpace, capable of ſuch heavenly improvements—all ſcrawled over and defaced with—

—I want words to ſay with what—for I think only of the reflections with which you are to ſupport yourſelves in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away, ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly, As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage—ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again—We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable; and yet the world looks happy enough—and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted, indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings, and ſeems rather to be giving a hiſtory of his ſufferings, than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the GOD of Love. Look upon the world he has given us,—obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the ten-

perate,—but of the fanciful and wanton;—every place is almoſt a paradiſe, planted when nature was in her gayeſt humour.

—Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the globe,—and this repreſentation another:—truth lieth betwixt—or rather, good and evil are mixed up together. Which of the two preponderates, is beyond our inquiry;—but, I truſt—it is the good:—firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to us; and ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe, that a work intended to exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increaſe the complaint,—or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuits college of Granada gave of their *Sanchez*,—That, though he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet he was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die, than eat ſalt or pepper, or aught that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men whoſe natural pleaſures are burdens, and who fly from joy, (as theſe ſplenetic and moroſe ſouls do), as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, it is ſorrow and heavineſs of heart.—The loſs of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occaſion ſorrow; take that

out—the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enow—but he muſt fill up the meaſure with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,—but diſquiet himſelf in vain too.

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,—the beſt we can do in it, is to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character, which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities; —when they find they cannot conquer them, —they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If, therefore, we muſt be a ſolicitous race of ſelf-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us ſo,—and for GOD's ſake be ſolicitous only to live well.

SERMON XXIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS CONSIDERED.

LUKE xvi. 31.—*And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.*

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the deſign of which was, to ſhow us the neceſſity of conducting ourſelves, by ſuch lights as GOD had been pleaſed to give us: the ſenſe and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text, being this, That they who will not be perſuaded to anſwer the great purpoſes of their being, upon ſuch arguments as are offered to them in ſcripture, will never be perſuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary ſoever;—*If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.*

——Riſe from the dead! To what purpoſe? What could ſuch a meſſenger propoſe or urge, which had not been propoſed and urged already?—The novelty or ſurpriſe of ſuch a viſit might awaken the attention of a

curious unthinking people, who ſpent their time in nothing elſe, but to hear and tell ſome new thing; but, ere the wonder was well over, ſome new wonder would ſtart up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a ſoul make one inquiry about him.

—This, I fear, would be the concluſion of the affair. But, to bring this matter ſtill cloſer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that GOD, in compliance with a curious world,—or, from a better motive—in compaſſion to a ſinful one, ſhould vouchſafe to ſend one from the dead, to call home our conſciences, and make us better Chriſtians, better citizens, better men, and better ſervants to GOD than we are.

Now bear with me, I beſeech you, in framing ſuch an addreſs, as, I imagine, would be moſt likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to ſay: the great channel to it, is Intereſt,—and there he would ſet out.

He might tell us (after the moſt indiſputable credentials of whom he ſerved), That he was come a meſſenger from the great GOD of Heaven, with reiterated propoſals, whereby much was to be granted to us on his ſide,—and ſomething to be parted with on ours: but that, not to alarm us,—it was neither houſes, nor land, nor poſſeſſions;—it was neither wives, or children, or brethren, or

ſiſters, which we had to forſake;—no one rational pleaſure to be given up;—no natural endearment to be torn from—

—In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with—but what was not for our intereſts to keep,—and that was our vices; which brought death and miſery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thouſand arguments, that, to be temperate and chaſte, and juſt and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another,—was only doing that for CHRIST's ſake, which was moſt for our own; and that, were we in a capacity of capitulating with GOD, upon what terms we would ſubmit to his government,—he would convince us, it would be impoſſible for the wit of man, to frame any propoſals more for our preſent intereſts, than *to lead an uncorrupted life—to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites, as are for the honour of human nature, and the refinement of human happineſs.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from Intereſt got over,—the ſpectre might addreſs himſelf to the other paſſions:—in doing this, he could but give us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of GOD,—nor could he do more than impreſs the moſt awful ones, of his majeſty and power:—he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening to the place from

whence we ſhall not return;—that, during our ſtay, we ſtood accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercies,—yet was terrible in his judgments;—that he took notice of all our actions;—that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and ſpied out all our ways; and was ſo pure in his nature, that he would puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had appointed a day, wherein he would enter into this inquiry.—

He might add—

—But what?—with all the eloquence of an inſpired tongue, What could he add or ſay to us, which has not been ſaid before? The experiment has been tried a thouſand times, upon the hopes and fears, the reaſons and paſſions of men, by all the powers of nature,—the applications of which have been ſo great, and the variety of addreſſes ſo unanſwerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that ſo good a religion ſhould be no better recommended by its profeſſors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced,—and, ſo long as the pre-engagement with our paſſions ſubſiſts, it is not argumentation which can do the buſineſs:—we may amuſe ourſelves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reaſon not with the proper faculty, when we ſee every thing in the ſhape and colouring, in which

the treachery of the ſenſes paints it: and, indeed, were we only to look into the world, and obſerve how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,—one would think, at firſt ſight, they believed, that all diſcourſes of religion and virtue were mere matters of ſpeculation, for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we ſeemed to be agreed in no one thing; but ſpeaking well, and acting ill. But the trueſt comment is in the text,—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, &c.*

If they are not brought over to the intereſts of religion upon ſuch diſcoveries as GOD has made, or has enabled them to make, they will ſtand out againſt all evidence; in vain ſhall one *riſe* for their conviction:—was the earth to give up her dead—it would be the ſame;—every man would return again to his courſe; and the ſame bad paſſions would produce the ſame bad actions, to the end of the world.

This is the principal leſſon of the parable; but I muſt enlarge upon the whole of it—becauſe it has ſome other uſeful leſſons, and they will beſt preſent themſelves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the moſt remarkable in the goſpel, our SAVIOUR repreſents a ſcene, in which, by a kind of contraſt, two of the moſt oppoſite conditions

that could be brought together from human life, are paſſed before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the higheſt pinnacle of proſperity,—to riches—to happineſs.—I ſay, *happineſs*,—in compliance with the world, and on a ſuppoſition, that the poſſeſſion of riches muſt make us happy, when the very purſuit of them ſo warms our imaginations, that we ſtake both body and ſoul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchaſed at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wiſdom,—as well as of folly.—Whatever was the caſe here, is beyond the purport of the parable;—the ſcripture is ſilent, and ſo ſhould we; it marks only his outward condition by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:—to gratify the one, he was clothed in purple and fine linen; to ſatisfy the other,—fared ſumptuouſly every day,—and upon every thing too—we will ſuppoſe, that climates could furniſh, that luxury could invent, or the hand of ſcience could torture.

Cloſe by his gates is repreſented an object whom Providence might ſeem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and ſhow him to what wretchedneſs his condition might be brought: a creature in all the ſhipwreck of nature,—helpleſs—undone—in want of friends, in want of health,—and in want of

every thing, with them, which his diſtreſſes call for.

In this ſtate he is deſcribed as deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: and, though the caſe is not expreſsly put, that he was refuſed—yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the hiſtorical part of the parable, or pleaded after by the other, that he ſhowed mercy to the miſerable, we may conclude his requeſt was unſucceſsful;—like too many others in the world, either ſo high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down diſtinctly enough upon the ſufferings of their fellow-creatures,—or, by long ſurfeiting in a continual courſe of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is ſuch a diſtemper as hunger in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thouſand unpitied wants, in a pilgrimage through an inhoſpitable world, the poor man ſinks ſilently under his burden.—But, good God! whence is this? Why doſt thou ſuffer theſe hardſhips in a world which thou haſt made? Is it for thy honour, that one man ſhould eat the bread of fulneſs, and ſo many of his own ſtock and lineage eat the bread of ſorrow?—That this man ſhould go clad in purple, and have all his paths ſtrewed with roſe buds of delight, whilſt ſo many mournful paſſengers go heavily along, and paſs by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy glory,

O GOD! that ſo large a ſhade of miſery ſhould be ſpread acroſs thy works?—or, is it that we ſee but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and, all that has held the two worlds in harmony, is ſeen;—when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the diſtreſsful incidents of this Drama ſhall be unravelled,—when every man's caſe ſhall be reconſidered;—then wilt thou be fully juſtified in all thy ways, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped.

After a long day of mercy, miſpent in riot and uncharitableneſs, the rich man *died alſo*, ——the parable adds—and was buried;—buried, no doubt, in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to proſtitute upon thoſe occaſions.

But this was the laſt vain ſhow,—the utter concluſion of all his epicurean grandeur;—the next is a ſcene of horror, where he is repreſented by our SAVIOUR, in a ſtate of the utmoſt miſery, from whence he is ſuppoſed to lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveđſt thy good things—

—That he had received his good things,—it was from heaven,—and could be no reproach: with what ſeverity ſoever the ſcripture ſpeaks againſt riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring ſumptuouſly every

day, was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it is a real part of a vicious character. The case might be then, as now: his quality and station in the world might be supposed to be such, as not only to have justified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it, without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of stations there must be in the world, which must be supported by such marks of distinction as custom imposes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is described to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, with thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, for the daily provision of his table;—all this is not laid to him as a sin, but rather remarked as an instance of GOD's blessing to him;—and, whenever these things are otherwise, it is from a wasteful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends,—and, oft-times, to the very opposite ones for which they were granted—to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.—

And this seems to have been the snare the rich man had fallen into;—and, possibly, had he fared less sumptuously,—he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better disposed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compassion for it.

And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things.——Remember!—Sad ſubject of recollection! that a man has paſſed through this world with all the bleſſings and advantages of it on his ſide,—favoured by GOD Almighty with riches,—befriended by his fellow-creatures in the means of acquiring them,—aſſiſted, every hour, by the ſociety of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them;——to remember, how much he has received—how little he has beſtowed,—that he has been no man's friend—no one's protector—no one's benefactor——Bleſſed God!

Thus begging in vain for himſelf, he is repreſented at laſt as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be ſent to them to give them warning, and ſave them from the ruin which he had fallen into;—*They have Moſes and the prophets*, was the anſwer of the patriarch—*let them hear them:* but the unhappy man is repreſented as diſcontented with it; and ſtill perſiſting in his requeſt, and urging,—*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

—He thought ſo—but Abraham knew otherwiſe: and the grounds of the determination I have explained already,—ſo ſhall proceed to draw ſome other concluſions and leſſons from the parable.

And firſt, our SAVIOUR might farther intend to diſcover to us, by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expoſe mankind, agreeably to what is elſewhere declared, how hardly ſhall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a bleſſing for GOD to truſt us with, or we to manage:—they ſurround us, at all times, with eaſe, with nonſenſe, with flattery, and falſe friends, with which thouſands, and ten thouſands, have periſhed:—they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherouſly to conceal them from us;—they hourly adminiſter to our temptations,—and allow us neither time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them;—nay, what is ſtrange, do they not often tempt men even to covetouſneſs?—and though, amidſt all the ill offices which riches do us, one would laſt ſuſpect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other;—yet, ſo it is, that many a man contracts his ſpirits, upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is leſs need to preach againſt this:—we ſeem all to be haſtening to the oppoſite extreme of luxury and expence:—we generally content ourſelves with the ſolution of it, and ſay, It is a natural conſequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a miſtake in the account; and that it is not riches which

are the cauſe of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads ſo many thouſands on with an affectation of poſſeſſing more than they have,—and, conſequently, of engaging in a ſyſtem of expences they cannot ſupport.

In one word, it is the neceſſity of *appearing* to be ſomebody, in order *to be* ſo—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another leſſon in the parable, concerning the true uſe and application of riches:—we may be ſure, from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ thoſe talents as GOD intended.

How GOD did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inſcription you ſhall read there,—as from any chapter and verſe I might cite upon the ſubject. Let us, then, for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and conſider the traces which even the moſt inſenſible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive ſpringing up within him from ſome caſual act of generoſity;—and though this is a pleaſure which properly belongs to the good, yet, let him try the experiment;—let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight ariſ-

ing in the mind from the conſcience of a humane action.

But, to know it right, we muſt call upon the compaſſionate.—Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleaſure but imperfectly;—for this, like all other pleaſures, is of a relative nature, and, conſequently, the enjoyment of it requires ſome qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does:—there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper, which will render that good—good to that individual;—otherwiſe, though, it is true, it may be poſſeſſed—yet it never can be enjoyed.

Conſider how difficult you would find it, to convince a miſerly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable;—or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleaſant.

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modelled both mind and body to no other happineſs but good eating and drinking,—bid him *taſte and ſee how good God is*:—there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind muſt be like your propoſition, before it can be reliſhed;—and it is the reſemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your ſide.

It is therefore not to the cruel,—it is to the merciful;—to thoſe who rejoice with

them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,—that we make this appeal: it is to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the ſad * ſtory of the fatherleſs, and of him who hath no helper, and beſpeak your almſgiving in behalf of thoſe, who know not how to aſk for it themſelves.

—What can I ſay more?—It is a ſubject on which I cannot inform your judgment,—and, in ſuch an audience, I would not preſume to practiſe upon your paſſions:—let it ſuffice to ſay, that they whom GOD hath bleſſed with the means,—and for whom he has done more, in bleſſing them likewiſe with a diſpoſition,—have abundant reaſon to be thankful to him, as the Author of every good gift, for the meaſure he hath beſtowed to them of both:—it is the refuge againſt the ſtormy wind and tempeſt, which he has planted in our hearts;—and the conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, forces all the ſons and daughters of Adam to ſeek ſhelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and ſettlements as we will, the moſt affluent plenty may be ſtripped, and find all its worldly comforts, like ſo many withered leaves, dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be ſhaken;—and the greateſt that ever awed the world, have looked back, and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

* Charity Sermon at St Andrews, Holborn.

That which has happened to one,—may happen to every man;—and therefore, that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing else, should govern us;—*That whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them.*

Hast thou ever laid upon the bed of languishing, or laboured under a distemper which threatened thy life?—Call to mind thy sorrowful and pensive spirit at that time, and say, What it was that made the thoughts of death so bitter?—if thou hadst children,—I affirm it, the bitterness of death lay there;—if unbrought up, and unprovided for,—What will become of them?—Where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will stand up for them, and plead their cause against the wicked?

—Blessed GOD! to thee, who art a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow, I entrust them.

Hast thou ever sustained any considerable shock in thy fortune?—or, has the scantiness of thy condition hurried thee into great straits, and brought thee almost to distraction?—Consider who was it that spread a table in that wilderness of thought,—who made thy cup to overflow!—Was it not a friend of consolation who stepped in,—saw thee embarrassed with the tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,—took them under his protection——(Heaven! thou wilt reward

him for it!)—and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehenſions of a parent's love?

Haſt thou—

—But, how ſhall I aſk a queſtion which muſt bring tears into ſo many eyes?—Haſt thou ever been wounded, in a more affecting manner ſtill, by the loſs of a moſt obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child, by the ſtroke of death?—Bitter remembrance!—Nature droops at it—but Nature is the ſame in all conditions and lots of life.—A child thruſt forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of inſtruction, and the means of its ſalvation, is a ſubject of more tender heartaches, and will awaken every power of nature.—As we have felt for ourſelves,—let us feel—for CHRIST's ſake—let us feel for others:—and may the GOD of all comfort bleſs you. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIV.

PRIDE.

LUKE xiv. 10, 11.—*But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee:—for whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.*

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR's to Humility, addreſſed by way of inference from what he had ſaid in the three foregoing verſes of the chapter; where, upon entering into the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees, to eat bread, and marking how ſmall a portion of this neceſſary virtue entered in with the ſeveral gueſts, diſcovering itſelf from their chooſing the chief rooms and moſt diſtinguiſhed places of honour;—he takes the occaſion which ſuch a behaviour offered, to caution them againſt Pride;—ſtates the inconvenience of the paſſion;—ſhows the diſappointments which attend it;—the diſgrace in which it generally ends, in being forced, at laſt, to recede from the pretenſions to what is more than our due;—which, by the way, is the very

thing the paſſion is eternally prompting us to expect.—When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, ſays our SAVIOUR, ſit not down in the higheſt room, leſt a more honourable man than thou, be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and ſay to thee,—Give this man place:—and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room.

—But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room.—Hard lecture!—In the loweſt room?—What!—Do I owe nothing to myſelf?—Muſt I forget my ſtation, my character in life?—Reſign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in poſſeſſion of?—Give all up! and ſuffer inferiors to take my honour?—Yes;—for that, ſays our SAVIOUR, is the road to it:—*For when he that bade thee cometh, he will ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee:—for whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.*

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not neceſſary we ſhould look beyond this life, and ſay, That in the day of retribution, wherein every high thing ſhall be brought low, and every irregular paſſion dealt with as it deſerves;—that pride, amongſt the reſt, (conſidered as a vicious character), ſhall meet with its proper puniſhment, of being

abaſed, and lying down for ever in ſhame and diſhonour.—It is not neceſſary we ſhould look ſo far forwards, for the accompliſhment of this:—the words ſeem not ſo much to imply the threat of a diſtant puniſhment, the execution of which was to be reſpited to that day,—as the declaration of a plain truth, depending upon the natural courſe of things,—and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world; from whence, as well as from our reaſoning upon the point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to ſo many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature reſts ſecure from,—that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of mens paſſions, which, though very bad executioners in general, yet are ſo far juſt ones in this, that they ſeldom ſuffer the exultations of an inſolent temper to eſcape the abaſement, or the deportment of an humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deſerve.

In other vicious exceſſes which a man commits, the world (though it is not much to its credit) ſeems to ſtand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greateſt enemy to yourſelf;—or, if an enemy to the public—at leaſt you are ſo remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himſelf immediately concerned in your puniſhment: but in the inſtances of

pride, the attack is perſonal; for as this paſſion can only take its riſe from a ſecret compariſon, which the party has been making of himſelf to my diſadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is ſo far a direct injury, either as it withholds the reſpect which is my due—or perhaps denies me to have any; or elſe, which preſſes equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conſcious, and conſequently think myſelf the leſs deſerving of an admonition: in every one of which caſes, the proud man, in whatever language he ſpeaks it,—if it is expreſſive of his ſuperiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean eſtimation, and poſſibly a very unfair one of the like pretenſions in myſelf,—the attack, I ſay, is perſonal; and has generally the fate to be felt and reſented as ſuch.

So that with regard to the preſent inconveniences, there is ſcarce any vice, bating ſuch as are immediately puniſhed by laws, which a man may not indulge with more ſafety to himſelf, than this one of pride;—the humbleſt of men, not being ſo entirely void of the paſſion themſelves, but that they ſuffer ſo much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accompliſhment of the text, a common intereſt and concern; in which they are generally ſucceſsful,—the na-

ture of the vice being ſuch, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occaſions itſelf of its own humiliation.

The proud man—ſee!—he is ſore all over: touch him—you put him to pain: and though, of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all ſenſe and feeling, yet is poſſeſſed with ſo nice and exquiſite a one himſelf, that the ſlights, the little neglects and inſtances of diſeſteem, which would be ſcarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man, was it only for this, that it ſhould not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chaſtiſe me;—my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at leaſt will not incommode me;—ſo little diſcountenance do I ſee given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I ſuffer by them:—but here—if I exalt myſelf, I have no proſpect of eſcaping;—with this vice I ſtand ſwoln up in every body's way, and muſt unavoidably be thruſt back: whichever way I turn, whatever ſtep I take under the direction of this paſſion, I preſs unkindly upon ſome one, and, in return, muſt prepare myſelf for ſuch mortifying repulſes, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way ſorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life, as far back as Solomon—whoſe obſervation upon it was the ſame—

and it will ever hold good—*that before honour was humility, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall. —Put not therefore thyſelf forth in the preſence of the king, and ſtand not in the place of great men:—for better is it*—(which by the way is the very diſſuaſive in the text)—*better is it, that it be ſaid unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou ſhouldſt be put lower in the preſence of the prince whom thine eyes have ſeen.*

Thus much for the illuſtration of this one argument of our SAVIOUR's, againſt Pride:—there are many other conſiderations which expoſe the weakneſs of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have ſuggeſted; but as the particular occaſion which gave riſe to this lecture of our SAVIOUR's againſt pride, naturally led him to ſpeak of the mortifications which attend ſuch inſtances of it as he then beheld;—for this reaſon, the other arguments might be omitted, which, perhaps, in a ſet diſcourſe, would be doing injuſtice to the ſubject. I ſhall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer ſome other conſiderations, of a moral as well as a religious nature, upon this ſubject, as ſo many inducements to check this weak paſſion in man; which, though one of the moſt inconvenient of his infirmities,—the moſt painful and diſcourteous to ſociety, yet, by a ſad fatality, ſo it is, that there are few vices, except ſuch whoſe temptations are immediately ſeated in

our natures, to which there is so general a propensity throughout the whole race.

This had led some satirical pens to write, That all mankind, at the bottom, were proud alike —that one man differed from another, not so much in the different portions which he possessed of it, as in the different art and address by which he excels in the management and disguise of it to the world. We trample, no doubt, too often upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet, on the whole, the remark has more spleen than truth in it; there being thousands (if any evidence is to be allowed) of the most unaffected humility, and truest poverty of spirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithstanding this, so much may be allowed to the observation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in society so insensibly—steals in, unobserved, upon the heart, upon so many occasions—forms itself upon such strange pretensions, and, when it has done, veils itself under such a variety of unsuspected appearances—sometimes even under that of Humility itself;—in all which cases, Self-love, like a false friend, instead of checking, most treacherously feeds this humour—points out some excellence in every soul to make him vain, and think more highly of himself than he ought to think;—that, upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betrayed—or which re-

quires greater helps of good ſenſe, and good principles, to guard againſt.

And firſt, the root from which it ſprings, is no inconſiderable diſcredit to the fruit.

If you look into the beſt moral writers, who have taken pains to ſearch into the grounds of this paſſion—they will tell you, That pride is the vice of little and contracted ſouls:—that whatever affectation of greatneſs it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanneſs in the heart of it:—a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer akin than they will acknowledge:—like *poor* relations, they look a little ſhy at one another at firſt ſight; but, trace back their pedigree—they are but collateral branches from the ſame ſtem; and there is ſcarce any one who has not ſeen many ſuch inſtances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable ſtroke he has given of this affinity, in his deſcription of a *Pride which licks the duſt.*

As it has *meanneſs* at the bottom of it—ſo it is juſtly charged with having *weakneſs* there too; of which, it gives the ſtrongeſt proof, in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment:—What is it the proud man aims at?—Why—ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference as is due to his ſuperior merit, *&c. &c.*

Now, good ſenſe, and a knowledge of the world, ſhow us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation—they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted upon. Honour and reſpect muſt be a *free-will offering*: treat them otherwiſe, and claim them from the world as a tax—they are ſure to be withheld; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of its weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another, of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no leſs a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion. In ſober truth, it is but a ſcurvy kind of a trick—*(quoties voluit Fortuna jocari)*—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil, with this paſſion in his head, and mounts him up, all at once, as high as ſhe can get him—for it is ſure to make him play ſuch phantaſtic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and, was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the repreſentation.

A third argument againſt pride, is the natural connexion it has with vices of an unſocial aſpect: the Scripture ſeldom introduces

it alone—Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or ſome inimical paſſion, is ever upon the ſtage with it; the proofs and reaſons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore ſhall ſay no more upon this argument, than this—That, was there no other—yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be ſufficient, by itſelf, to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral conſiderations upon this ſubject; a great part of which, as they illuſtrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride, in a ſocial light, may ſeem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the paſſion itſelf, and root it out of their nature. To do this effectually, we muſt add the arguments of religion, without which, the beſt moral diſcourſe may prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the paſſion, ſo as not to be injurious to a man's preſent intereſt or quiet; all which, a man may learn to practiſe well enough, and yet, at the ſame time, be a perfect ſtranger to the beſt part of humility, which implies, not a concealment of Pride, but an abſolute conqueſt over the firſt riſings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And firſt, one of the moſt perſuaſive arguments which religion offers to this end, is that which ariſes from the ſtate and condition of ourſelves, both as to our natural and mo-

ral imperfections. It is impoſſible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!—even a thing of nought*—a poor, infirm, miſerable, ſhort-lived creature, that paſſes away like a ſhadow, and is haſtening off the ſtage, where the theatrical titles and diſtinctions, and the whole maſk of Pride which he has worn for a day, will fall off, and leave him naked, as a neglected ſlave. Send forth your imagination, I beſeech you, to view the laſt ſcene of the greateſt and proudeſt who ever awed and governed the world—ſee the empty vapour diſappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment ſticks faſt within him:—See!—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and ſpirits.

—Approach his bed of ſtate—lift up the curtain—regard a moment with ſilence—

—Are theſe cold hands and pale lips all that is left of him, who was canonized by his own pride, or made a god of by his flatterers?

O my ſoul! with what dreams haſt thou been bewitched? how haſt thou been deluded by the objects thou haſt ſo eagerly graſped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheleſs ſtrike a damp upon human pride; much more muſt the conſiderations do

ſo, which ariſe from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourſelves, my dear Chriſtians, a few moments in this light—behold a diſobedient, ungrateful, intractable and diſorderly ſet of creatures, going wrong ſeven times in a day—acting ſometimes every hour of it againſt your own convictions—your own intereſts and the intentions of your God, who wills and propoſes nothing but your happineſs and proſperity—What reaſon does this view furniſh you with for pride? how many does it ſuggeſt, to mortify and make you aſhamed?—Well might the ſon of Syrach ſay, in that ſarcaſtical remark of his upon it, *That* PRIDE *was not made for man*;—for ſome purpoſes, and for ſome particular beings, the paſſion might have been ſhaped—but not for him;—fancy it where you will, it is nowhere ſo improper—it is in no creature ſo unbecoming—

—But why ſo cold an aſſent to ſo unconteſted a truth?—Perhaps thou haſt reaſons to be proud:—for heaven's ſake let us hear them.—Thou haſt the advantages of birth and title to boaſt of—or thou ſtandeſt in the ſunſhine of court favour—or thou haſt a large fortune—or great talents—or much learning—or Nature has beſtowed her graces upon thy perſon;—ſpeak—on which of theſe foundations haſt thou raiſed this fanciful ſtructure?—Let us examine them.

Thou art well born;—then truſt me, it will pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank—diveſts not princes of their titles: it is in life, what the *clear obſcure* is in painting—it makes the hero ſtep forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group, in which he would ſtand otherwiſe confounded for ever.

If thou art rich—then ſhow the greatneſs of thy fortune—or, what is better, the greatneſs of thy ſoul, in the meekneſs of thy converſation; condeſcend to men of low eſtate—ſupport the diſtreſſed, and patronize the neglected.—Be great; but let it be in conſidering riches as they are—as *talents committed to an earthen veſſel;*—that thou art but the *receiver;*—and that, to be obliged, and to be vain too—is but the old ſoleciſm of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet—yet ever make but an abſurd ſociety.

If thou art powerful in intereſt, and ſtandſt deified by a ſervile tribe of dependants—why ſhouldſt thou be proud—becauſe they are hungry?—Scourge me ſuch ſycophants; they have turned the heads of thouſands as well as thine.—

—But it is thy own dexterity and ſtrength which have gained thee this eminence:—allow it; but art thou proud, that thou ſtandſt in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third

man's revenge—where good men may be ready to ſuſpect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down? I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain. Haman was ſo, becauſe he was admitted alone to queen Eſther's banquet; and the diſtinction raiſed him—but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dreamed or thought of.

Let us paſs on to the pretences of learning, *&c. &c.* If thou haſt a little, thou wilt be proud of it in courſe: if thou haſt much, and good ſenſe along with it, there will be no reaſon to diſpute againſt the paſſion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a ſorry object of Pride at the beſt;—but more ſo, when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet—* *Alas! Maſter—for it was borrowed.*

It is treaſon to ſay the ſame of Beauty—whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to ſet it off. The weakeſt minds are moſt caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from ſmall and ſlender accidents, through diſability of purchaſing them by better means. In truth, Beauty has ſo many charms, one knows not how to ſpeak againſt it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous ſoul—when the beauty of the face ſpeaks out the modeſty and humility of the mind, and the juſtneſs of the propor-

* 2 Kings vi. 7.

ſion raiſes our thoughts up to the art and wiſdom of the great Creator—ſomething may be allowed it—and ſomething to the embelliſhments which ſet it off;—and yet, when the whole apology is read—it will be found at laſt, that Beauty, like Truth, never is ſo glorious as when it goes the plaineſt.

Simplicity is the great friend to Nature; and if I would be proud of any thing in this ſilly world, it ſhould be of this honeſt alliance.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may the God of all mercies and kindneſs watch over your paſſions, and inſpire you *with all humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, patience, and long-ſuffering.*—Amen.

SERMON XXV.

HUMILITY.

MAT. xi. 29.——*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.*

THE great buſineſs of man, is the regulation of his ſpirit; the poſſeſſion of ſuch a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and, in the many weary ſtages of it, afford us, what we ſhall be ſure to ſtand in need of—*reſt unto our ſouls.*—

—Reſt unto our ſouls!—it is all we want—the end of all our wiſhes and purſuits; give us a proſpect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth to have it in poſſeſſion: we ſeek for it in titles, in riches and pleaſures—climb up after it by ambition—come down again, and ſtoop for it by avarice—try all extremes; ſtill we are gone out of the way: nor is it till after many miſerable experiments, that we are convinced at laſt, we have been ſeeking every where for it, but where there was a proſpect of finding it; and that is, within ourſelves, in a meek and lowly diſpoſition of heart.

This, and this only, will give us reſt unto our ſouls:—reſt from thoſe turbulent and haughty paſſions which diſturb our quiet:—reſt from the provocations and diſappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, againſt all which this frame and preparation of mind is the beſt protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Conſider how great a ſhare of the uneaſineſſes which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their riſe to nothing elſe but the diſpoſitions of mind which are oppoſite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world—take it as a rule—As a man's pride is—ſo is always his diſpleaſure;—as the opinion of himſelf riſes—ſo does the injury—ſo does his reſentment: it is this which gives edge and force to the inſtrument which has ſtruck him—and excites that heat in the wound which renders it incurable.

See how different the caſe is with the humble man: one half of theſe painful conflicts he actually eſcapes; the other part falls lightly on him:—he provokes no man by contempt; thruſts himſelf forward as the mark of no man's envy; ſo that he cuts off the firſt fretful occaſions of the greateſt part of theſe evils; and, for thoſe in which the paſſions of others would involve him, like the humble

ſhrub in the valley, gently gives way, and ſcarce feels the injury of thoſe ſtormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by its roots.

If you conſider it, with regard to the many diſappointments of this life, which ariſe from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world,—the reaſoning is the ſame.

What we expect—is ever in proportion to the eſtimate made of ourſelves. When pride and ſelf-love have brought us in their account of this matter—we find, that we are worthy of all honours, fit for all places and employments: as our expectations riſe and multiply, ſo muſt our diſappointments with them; and there needs nothing more, to lay the foundation of our unhappineſs, and both to make and keep us miſerable. And in truth, there is nothing ſo common in life, as to ſee thouſands, who, you would ſay, had all the reaſon in the world to be at reſt, ſo torn up and diſquieted with ſorrows of this claſs, and ſo inceſſantly tortured with the diſappointments which their pride and paſſions have created for them, that though they appear to have all the ingredients of happineſs in their hands, they can neither compound or uſe them:—How ſhould they? the goad is ever in their ſides, and ſo hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no reſt day or night.

Humility, therefore, recommends itſelf as a ſecurity againſt theſe heartaches, which, though ridiculous ſometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are ſerious enough to the man who ſuffers them—and, I believe, would make no inconſiderable account in a true catalogue of the diſquietudes of mortal man: againſt theſe, I ſay, Humility is the beſt defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his deſires, and conſequently moderate in his purſuit of them: like another man, he may fail in his attempts, and loſe the point he aimed at—but that is all;—he loſes not himſelf—he loſes not his happineſs and peace of mind with it;—even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid. Bleſſed character! when ſuch a one is thruſt back, who does not pity him? when he falls, who would not ſtretch out a hand to raiſe him up?

And here, I cannot help ſtopping in the midſt of this argument, to make a ſhort obſervation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility, we are apt to think it ſtands the moſt naked and defenceleſs of all virtues whatever, the leaſt able to ſupport its claims againſt the inſolent antagoniſt who ſeems ready to bear him down, and all oppoſition which ſuch a temper can make.

Now, if we conſider him as ſtanding alone—no doubt, in ſuch a caſe, he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his oppoſer:

but if we conſider the meek and lowly man as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendſhip and wiſhes of all mankind!—that the other ſtands alone, hated, diſcountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wiſher on his ſide;—when this is balanced, we ſhall have reaſon to change our opinion, and be convinced, that the humble man, ſtrengthened with ſuch an alliance, is far from from being ſo overmatched as at firſt ſight he may appear; nay, I believe one might venture to go farther, and engage for it, that in all ſuch caſes, where real fortitude and true perſonal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would ſooner look for it in ſuch a temper, than in that of his adverſary. Pride may make a man violent, but Humility will make him firm: and which of the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?—he who acts from the changeable impulſe of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury, or the man who ſtands cool and collected in himſelf—who governs his reſentments, inſtead of being governed by them, and, on every occaſion, acts upon the ſteady motives of principle and duty?

But this by the way—though, in truth, it falls in with the main argument: for, if the obſervation is juſt, and Humility has the advantages where we ſhould leaſt expect them, the argument riſes higher in behalf of thoſe

which are more apparently on its ſide. In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man muſt never hope for in this world —that is, *reſt to his ſoul*—ſo does he likewiſe meet with it from the influence ſuch a temper has upon his condition, under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance, by the appointment of God. For if, as Job ſays, we are born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards—ſurely, it is he who thinks the greateſt of theſe troubles below his ſins, and the malleſt favours above his merit, that is likely to ſuffer the leaſt from the one, and enjoy the moſt from the other: it is he who poſſeſſes his ſoul in meekneſs, and keeps it ſubjected to all the iſſues of fortune, that is the fartheſt out of their reach. No—He blames not the ſun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor bluſters at the winds though they bring him no profit. If the fountain of the humble man riſes not as high as he could wiſh, he thinks, however, that it riſes as high as it ought—and, as the laws of nature ſtill do their duty, that he has no cauſe to complain againſt them.

If diſappointed of riches, he knows the providence of God is not his debtor; that though he has received leſs than others, yet, if he thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt, he has reaſon to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man in other reſpects,—he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world was not made for him; and therefore, how little ſhare ſoever he has of its advantages, he ſees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of ſin, of ignorance and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A ſoul thus turned and reſigned, is carried ſmoothly down the ſtream of providence;—no temptations in his paſſage diſquiet him with deſire—no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others, yet, by ſeeing the juſtice of what happens, and humbly giving way to the blow, though he is ſmitten, he is not ſmitten like other men, or feels the ſmart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is obſerved by ſome one, that as pride was the paſſion through which ſin and miſery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, when he entered upon the work of our reſtoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did, by endeavouring to bring the ſoul of man back to its original temper of Humility; ſo that his firſt public addreſs from the Mount, began with a decla-

ration of bleſſedneſs to the poor in ſpirit, and almoſt his laſt exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had ſet them of this virtue, and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, and ſo perſuaſive, and accommodated to all Chriſtians, that, as much pride as there is ſtill in the world, it is not credible but that every believer muſt receive ſome tincture of this character, or bias towards it, from the example of ſo great, and yet ſo humble a maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and, in every inſtance of it, ſhowed that he came, not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or ſwell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to caſt a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himſelf rather as a ſervant than a maſter,—coming, as he continually declared, not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter,—and, as the prophet had foretold, in that mournful deſcription of him, to have no form or comelineſs, nor any beauty, that they ſhould deſire him. The voluntary meanneſs of his birth—the poverty of his life—the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the goſpel to the poor—the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having nowhere to lay his head—all ſpoke the ſame language—that the God of truth ſhould ſubmit to the ſuſpicion of an impoſture:—

his humble deportment under that, and a thouſand provocations of a thankleſs people, ſtill raiſes his character higher; and, what exalts it to its higheſt pitch, is the tender and pathetic proof he gave of the ſame diſpoſition, at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of his ſufferings, when a life full of ſo many inſtances of humility, was crowned with the moſt endearing one, of *humbling himſelf even to the death of the croſs*—the death of a ſlave, a malefactor—dragged to *Calvary*, without oppoſition—inſulted without complaint.

Bleſſed JESUS!—How can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart? How can he but profit, when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded by ſuch an example?

If humility ſhines ſo bright in the character of CHRIST, ſo does it in that of his religion,—the true ſpirit of which tends all the ſame way.—Chriſtianity, when rightly explained and practiſed, is all meekneſs and candour, and love and courteſy; and there is no one paſſion our SAVIOUR rebukes ſo often, or with ſo much ſharpneſs, as that one, which is ſubverſive of theſe kind effects, and that is pride—which, in proportion as it governs us, neceſſarily leads us on to a diſcourteous opinion and treatment of others.—I ſay, *neceſſarily*—becauſe it is a natural conſequence, and the progreſs from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our SAVIOUR often remarks in the character of the Phariſees:—they truſted in themſelves—it was no wonder, then, they deſpiſed others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to ſpiritual pride, which, by the way, is the worſt of all pride;—and, as it is a very bad ſpecies of a very bad paſſion, I cannot do better than conclude the diſcourſe with ſome remarks upon it.

In moſt conceits of a religious ſuperiority, there has uſually gone, hand in hand with it, another fancy, which, I ſuppoſe, has fed it—and that is, a perſuaſion of ſome more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.—Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, in a way imperceptible to us, do enable us to render him an acceptable ſervice, we learn from ſcripture. In what particular manner this is effected, ſo that the act ſhall ſtill be imputed ours—the ſcripture ſays not: we know only the account is ſo: but as for any ſenſible demonſtrations of its workings, to be felt as ſuch within us—the word of God is utterly ſilent; nor can that ſilence be ſupplied by any experience. We have none, unleſs you call the falſe pretences to it ſuch—ſuggeſted by an enthuſiaſtic or diſtempered fancy. As expreſsly as we are told, and pray for the inſpiration of God's Spirit, there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever

marked, to diſtinguiſh them from the efforts and determinations of our own reaſon: and as firmly as moſt Chriſtians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may even venture to affirm, that ſince the promiſes were made, there never was a Chriſtian, of a cool head, and ſound judgement, that, in any inſtance of a change of life, would preſume to ſay, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help, or which to the operations of his own mind, or who, upon looking back, would pretend to ſtrike the line, and ſay, "Here it was that my own reflections ended," —and at this point the ſuggeſtions of the Spirit of God began to take place.

However backwards the world has been, in former ages, in the diſcovery of ſuch points as God never meant us to know, we have been more ſucceſsful in our own days: thouſands can trace out, now, the impreſſions of this divine intercourſe in themſelves, from the firſt moment they received it, and with ſuch diſtinct intelligence of its progreſs and workings, as to require no evidence of its truth.

It muſt be owned, that the preſent age has not altogether the honour of this diſcovery; there were too many grounds given to improve on, in the religious cant of the laſt century; when the *incomings*, *indwellings*, and *outlettings* of the Spirit, were the ſubjects of ſo much edification; and when, as they do

now, the moſt illiterate mechanics, who, as a witty divine ſaid of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able ſo to frame their nonſenſe to the nonſenſe of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they prayed and preached by inſpiration, but that the moſt common actions of their lives were ſet about in the Spirit of the Lord.

The tenets of the Quakers (a harmleſs, quiet people) are collateral deſcendants from the ſame enthuſiaſtic original; and their accounts and way of reaſoning upon their inward light and ſpiritual worſhip, are much the ſame; which laſt, they carry thus much farther, as to believe the Holy Ghoſt comes down upon their aſſemblies, and *moves* them, without regard to condition or ſex, to make interceſſions with unutterable groans.

So that, in fact, the opinions of Methodiſts, upon which I was firſt entering, is but a republication, with ſome alterations, of the ſame extravagant conceits; and as enthuſiaſm generally ſpeaks the ſame language in all ages, it is but too ſadly verified in this: for though we have not yet got to the old terms of the incomings and indwellings of the Spirit, yet we have arrived at the firſt feelings of its entrance, recorded with as particular an exactneſs as an act of filiation—ſo that numbers will tell you the identical place, the day of the month, and the hour of the night when

the Spirit came in upon them, and took poſ-ſeſſion of their hearts.

Now, there is this inconvenience on our ſide, that there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind: for unleſs a repreſentation of the caſe, be a confutation of its folly to them, they muſt for ever be led captive by a deluſion, from which no reaſoner can redeem them: for if you ſhould inquire upon what evidence ſo ſtrange a perſuaſion is grounded? they will tell you, "They feel it is ſo." If you reply, that this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore, would wiſh to be ſatisfied by what tokens they are able to diſtinguiſh ſuch emotions, from thoſe of fancy and complexion? they will anſwer, that the manner of it is incommunicable by human language; but it is a matter of fact: they feel its operations as plain and diſtinct, as the natural ſenſations of pleaſure, or the pains of a diſordered body. And ſince I have mentioned a diſordered body, I cannot help ſuggeſting, that, amongſt the more ſerious and deluded of this ſect, it is much to be doubted, whether a diſordered body has not oft-times as great a ſhare in letting in theſe conceits, as a diſordered mind.

When a poor diſconſolate drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment—prays without ceaſing till his imagination is heated—faſts, and mortifies, and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a

wonder, that the mechanical disturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what they are? or that, in such a situation, where the mind sits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its side, is it strange if every commotion should help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter subject for the treatment of a Physician than a Divine?

In many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either, that unless God, in his mercy, rebuke this lying spirit, and call it back—it may go on, and persuade millions to their destruction.

SERMON XXVI.

ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE WORLD.

ROM. i. 22.—*Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.*

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is ſo univerſally a bubble, as to that of being thought wiſe; and the affectation of it is ſo viſible, in men of all complexions, that you every day ſee ſome one or other ſo very ſolicitous to eſtabliſh the character, as not to allow himſelf leiſure to do the things which fairly win it; expending more art and ſtratagem to appear ſo in the eyes of the world, than what would ſuffice to make him ſo in truth.

It is owing to the force of this deſire, that you ſee, in general, there is no injury touches a man ſo ſenſibly, as an inſult upon his parts and capacity. Tell a man of other defects,—that he wants learning, induſtry, or application,—he will hear your reproof with patience.—Nay, you may go farther: take him in a proper ſeaſon, you may tax his morals; you may tell him he is irregular in his con-

duct, passionate or revengeful in his nature, loose in his principles: deliver it with the gentleness of a friend, possibly he will not only bear with you, but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture, and promise a reformation; but hint—hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,—touch but that sore place,—from that moment you are looked upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and, in return, may reckon upon his resentment and ill-will for ever; so that, in general, you will find it safer to tell a man that he is a knave, than a fool; and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than in a point of common sense.

Strange souls that we are!—as if, to live well, was not the greatest argument of wisdom;—and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not most of all reflect upon our understandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a shift to overlook in the heat of this pursuit; and though we all covet this great character of wisdom, there is scarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgements concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the test or the balance; and though it is of the last consequence not to be deceived in it, we generally take it upon trust; seldom suspect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So

that, however inconſiſtent a man ſhall be in his opinions of this, and what abſurd meaſures ſoever he takes in conſequence of it, in the conduct of his life, he ſtill ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul; and, like Solomon, when he had leaſt pretence for it, in the midſt of his nonſenſe, will cry out and ſay, *That all my wiſdom remaineth with me.*

Where, then, is wiſdom to be found? and where is the place of underſtanding?

The politicians of this world, *profeſſing themſelves wiſe*, admit of no other claims of wiſdom, but the knowledge of men and buſineſs; the underſtanding the intereſts of ſtates —the intrigues of courts; the finding out the paſſions and weakneſſes of foreign miniſters; and turning them, and all events, to their country's glory and advantage.

Not ſo the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wiſdom is, to take care of himſelf; to be wiſe in his generation; to make uſe of the opportunity, whilſt he has it, of raiſing a fortune, and heraldizing a name. Far wide is the ſpeculative and ſtudious man (whoſe office is in the clouds) from ſuch little ideas:—wiſdom dwells, with him, in finding out the ſecrets of nature; ſounding the depths of arts and ſciences; meaſuring the heavens; telling the number of the ſtars, and calling them all by their names: ſo that, when, in our buſy imaginations, we have built and unbuilt again *God's ſtories in the heaven*,

nd fancy we have found out the point where-
n to fix the foundations of the earth, and,
n the language of the book of Job, have
arched out the corner-ſtone thereof,—we
hink our titles to wiſdom built upon the
me baſis with thoſe of our knowledge, and
hat they will continue for ever.

The miſtake of theſe pretenders is ſhown
t large by the Apoſtle, in the chapter from
hich the text is taken, *Profeſſing themſelves*
ISE ;—in which expreſſion (by the way) St
aul is thought to allude to the vanity of the
reeks and Romans, who, being great en-
ouragers of arts and learning, which they had
arried to extraordinary heights, conſidered
l other nations as *Barbarians*, in reſpect of
hemſelves ; and amongſt whom, particularly
he Greeks, the men of ſtudy and inquiry
ad aſſumed to themſelves, with great inde-
orum, the title of the Wiſe Men.

With what parade and oſtentation ſoever
his was made out, it had the fate to be at-
nded with one of the moſt mortifying abaſe-
ents which could happen to wiſdom ; and
hat was, an ignorance of thoſe points which
oſt concerned man to know.

This he ſhows from the general ſtate of the
entile world, in the great article of their
iſconceptions of the Deity ; and, as wrong
otions produce wrong actions—of the duties
nd ſervices they owed to him, and, in courſe,
f what they owed to one another.

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verſes, *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world might be eaſily ſeen and underſtood, by the things that are made:* that is, though GOD, by the cleareſt diſcovery of himſelf, had ever laid before mankind ſuch evident proofs of his eternal Being,—his infinite powers and perfections,—ſo that, what is to be known of his inviſible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodneſs, and the viſible frame and order of the world; yet, ſo utterly were they without excuſe, that, though they knew GOD, and ſaw his image and ſuperſcription in every part of his works, *yet they glorified him not.* So bad a uſe did they make of the powers given them from this great diſcovery, that, inſtead of adoring the Being thus manifeſted to them in purity and truth, they fell into the moſt groſs and abſurd deluſions; *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men, to birds, to four-footed beaſts and creeping things:—Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.* All their ſpecious wiſdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the moſt diſhonourable of all miſtakes, in ſetting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poiſoned, no wonder the ſtream ſhowed its effects, which are charged upon them in the follow-

ng words, where he deſcribes the heathen orld, *as full of all unrighteouſneſs*, fornica- ion, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs, full of mur- er, envy, debate, malignity, whiſperers, ackbiters, haters of GOD, proud, boaſters, nventors of evil things, diſobedient to pa- ents, without underſtanding, without natural ffection, implacable, unmerciful!—GOD in eaven defend us from ſuch a catalogue!

But theſe diſorders, if fairly conſidered, ou will ſay, have, in no age, ariſen ſo much om want of light, as a want of diſpoſition o follow the light which GOD has ever im- arted: that the law written in their hearts, as clear and expreſs enough for any reaſon- ble creatures, and would have directed them, ad they not ſuffered their paſſions more for- bly to direct them otherwiſe: that if we e to judge from this effect, namely, the rruption of the world, the ſame prejudice ill recur even againſt the Chriſtian religion: nce mankind have at leaſt been as wicked in ter days, as in the more remote and ſimple es of the world: and that, if we may truſt facts, there are no vices which the Apoſtle es upon the heathen world, before the eaching of the goſpel, which may not be ralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in e Chriſtian world ſince.

This neceſſarily brings us to an inquiry, hether Chriſtianity has done the world any

ſervice? and, How far the morals of it have been made better ſince this ſyſtem has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppoſe facts to facts, to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us ſee how far their miſtakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the ſubject.

That there was one Supreme Being, who made this world, and who ought to be worſhipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and ſo obvious a truth in nature, that Reaſon, as the Apoſtle acknowledges, was always able to diſcover it: and yet it ſeems ſtrange, that the ſame faculty which made the diſcovery, ſhould be ſo little able to keep true to its own judgment, and ſupport it long againſt the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propenſity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of ſomething to have gone hand in hand with reaſon, and fixed the perſuaſion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one GOD, the maker and ſupporter of heaven and earth,—infinite in wiſdom and knowledge, and all perfections;—how ſoon was this ſimple idea loſt, and mankind led to diſpoſe of thoſe attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and ſubdivide them again amongſt deities, which their own dreams had given ſubſtance to;—his eternal power and dominion parcelled out to gods of the

and, to gods of the ſea, to gods of the infernal regions; whilſt the great GOD of gods, and LORD of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world, who is ſo great, that nought is able to controul or withſtand his power, was ſuppoſed to reſt contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within ſuch parts of his empire, as they diſmembered and aſſigned to others!

If the number of their gods, and this partition of their power, would leſſen the idea of their majeſty—What muſt be the opinions of their origin, when, inſtead of that glorious deſcription which Scripture gives of "The Ancient of Days, who inhabiteth eternity," they gravely aſſigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; ſo that there were ſcarce a hamlet, or even a deſert, in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by ſome favour or accident of this kind?

And, what rendered ſuch conceits the more groſs and abſurd, they ſuppoſed not only that the gods they worſhipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleſhly parents; and accordingly, they attributed to them corporeal ſhapes and difference of ſex; and, indeed, in this they were a little conſtent; for their deities ſeemed to partake ſo much of the frailties to which fleſh and blood ſubject, that their hiſtory and their pedigree

were much of a piece, and might reaſonably claim each other. For they imputed to them, not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the moſt unmanly ſenſualities, and, what would be a reproach to human nature, ſuch as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, inceſts; and, even in the accounts which we have from the ſublimeſt of their poets—what are they, but anecdotes of their ſquabbles amongſt themſelves, their intrigues, their jealouſies, their ungovernable tranſports of choler,—nay, even their thefts, their drunkenneſs, and bloodſhed?

Here let us ſtop a moment, and inquire, What was Reaſon doing all this time, to be ſo miſerably inſulted and abuſed? Where held ſhe her empire, whilſt her bulwarks were thus borne down, and her firſt principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If ſhe was able, by herſelf, to regain the power ſhe had loſt, and put a ſtop to this folly and confuſion, why did ſhe not? If ſhe was not able to reſiſt this torrent alone,—the point is given up—ſhe wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But though reaſon, you will ſay, could not overthrow theſe popular miſtakes, yet it ſaw the folly of them, and was at all times able to diſprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent inquirers after truth,

did not, in fact, fall into these absurd notions, which, by the way, is an observation more to our purpose than theirs who usually make it, and shows, that though their reasonings were good,—there was always wanting something which they could not supply, to give them such weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides,—which is a more direct answer,—though, it is true, the ablest men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods—(for they had a religion for themselves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which necessarily supported these very mistakes,—namely, that, as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty, (I suppose more for quietness than principle's sake) to worship the gods of his country; which, by the way, considering their numbers, was not so easy a task;—for, what with celestial gods, and gods aerial, terrestrial and infernal, with the goddesses their wives and mistresses, upon the lowest computation, the heathen world acknowledged no less than thirty thousand deities, all which claimed the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

But, it will be said, allowing the bulk of mankind were under such delusions—they were all but speculative.—What was that to their

practice?—However defective in their theology and more abſtracted points,—their morality was no way connected with it.—There is no need, that the everlaſting laws of juſtice and mercy ſhould be fetched down from above,—ſince they can be proved from more obvious mediums;—they were as neceſſary for the ſame good purpoſes of ſociety then, as now; and we may preſume they ſaw their intereſt, and purſued it.

That the neceſſities of ſociety, and the impoſſibilities of its ſubſiſting otherwiſe, would point out the convenience, or, if you will—the duty of ſocial virtues, is unqueſtionable:—but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear ſo far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious ſenſe of the duty, can act without the influence of the other. Surely the moſt exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue, muſt come down from *above*,—from the love and imitation of the goodneſs of that Being, in whoſe ſight we wiſh to render ourſelves acceptable; this will operate at all times and in all places—in the darkeſt cloſet, as much as on the greateſt and moſt public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or ſuch impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted, whether, in the many ſe-

ret trials of our virtue, we ſhould not deter-
nine our caſes of conſcience with much the
ame kind of caſuiſtry as that of the Liber-
ine in Terence, who being engaged in a
ery unjuſtifiable purſuit, and happening to
ee a picture which repreſented a known ſtory
f Jupiter in a like tranſaction,—argued the
natter thus within himſelf:—If the great Ju-
iter could not reſtrain his appetites, and de-
y himſelf an indulgence of this kind,—*ego Homuncio, hoc non facerem?* ſhall I, a mortal,
—an inconſiderable mortal too, clothed with
nfirmities of fleſh and blood,—pretend to a
irtue, which the father of gods and men
ould not?—What inſolence!

The concluſion was natural enough;—and
s ſo great a maſter of nature puts it into the
nouth of one of his principal characters, no
loubt the language was then underſtood;—it
vas copied from common life, and was not
he firſt application which had been made of
he ſtory.

It will ſcarce admit of a queſtion, Whether
vice would not naturally grow bold upon the
credit of ſuch an example;—or, Whether
ſuch impreſſions did not influence the lives
nd morals of many in the heathen world?—
And, had there been no other proof of it,
but the natural tendency of ſuch notions to
corrupt them, it had been ſufficient reaſon to
believe it was ſo.

No doubt, there is ſufficient room for a-mendment in the Chriſtian world,—and we may be ſaid to be a very corrupt and bad ge-neration of men, conſidering what motives we have, from the purity of our religion, and the force of its ſanctions, to make us better: yet ſtill I affirm, if theſe reſtraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worſe:—and though ſome ſenſe of morality might be preſerved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more conſiderate of us, yet, in ge-neral, I am perſuaded, that the bulk of man-kind, upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, would ſoon come to *live without* GOD *in the world*, and, in a ſhort time, differ from Indians themſelves in little elſe but their complexions.

If, after all, the Chriſtian religion has not left a ſufficient proviſion againſt the wicked-neſs of the world,—the ſhort and true anſwer is this, That there can be none.

It is ſufficient to leave us without excuſe, that the excellency of this inſtitution, in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;—every page is an addreſs to our hearts to win them to thoſe purpoſes.—But, as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural neceſſity, but by moral perſuaſion, which ſets good and evil before them;—ſo, if men have power to do the evil, and chooſe the good,—and will abuſe

,—this cannot be avoided.—Religion ever
mplies a freedom of choice;—and all the be-
ngs in the world which have it, were created
ree to ſtand, and free to fall;—and therefore,
hen, who will not be perſuaded by this way
f addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to
e reckoned with, according to the talent they
ave received.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AS the following Sermon, upon Abuſes of Conſcience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work, more read than underſtood, the Editor begs pardon of thoſe who have purchaſed it in that ſhape, and this alſo, for being made to pay twice actually for the ſame thing.

—The caſe is common:—but it was judged, that ſome might better like it, and others better underſtand it, juſt as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the ſenſe and argument, as it ſtands there offered to the world.

It was an Aſſize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote by the ſame hand with the others in theſe volumes; and, as they are probably the laſt (except the ſweepings of the Author's ſtudy after his death) that will be publiſhed, it was thought fit to add it to the collection—where, moreover, it ſtands a chance of being read by many grave people with a much ſafer conſcience.

All the Editor wiſhes, is, that this may not, after all, be one of thoſe many abuſes of it ſet forth in what he is now going to read.

SERMON XXVII.

THE ABUSES OF CONSCIENCE CONSIDERED.

HEBREWS xiii. 18.—*For we truſt we have a good conſcience.*——

TRUST!—Truſt we have a good Conſcience!—Surely, you will ſay, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving, upon the moſt indiſputable evidence, it muſt be this very thing—Whether he has a good Conſcience or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a ſtranger to the true ſtate of this account:—He muſt be privy to his own thoughts and deſires—He muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and know certainly the true ſprings and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life.

In other matters, we may be deceived by falſe appearances; and, as the wiſe man complains, *Hardly do we gueſs aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us.*—But here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herſelf;—is conſcious of the web ſhe has

ove;—knows its texture and fineneſs, and he exact ſhare which every paſſion has had in orking upon the ſeveral deſigns, which virue or vice has planned before her.

Now,—as Conſcience is nothing elſe but he knowledge which the mind has within itelf of this; and the judgment, either of aprobation or cenſure, which it unavoidably nakes upon the ſucceſſive actions of our lives, —it is plain, you will ſay, from the very erms of the propoſition, whenever this inard teſtimony goes againſt a man, and he tands ſelf-accuſed,—that he muſt neceſſarily e a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when he report is favourable on his ſide, and his eart condemns him not,—that it is not a natter of *truſt*, as the apoſtle intimates, but matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conience* is *good*, and that the *man* muſt be *good* lſo.

At firſt ſight, this may ſeem to be a true tate of the caſe;—and I make no doubt but he knowledge of right and wrong is ſo truly mpreſſed upon the mind of man, that, did o ſuch thing ever happen, as that the conience of a man, by long habits of ſin, might (as the Scripture aſſures us it may) inſenſibly become hard; and, like ſome tender part of his body, by much ſtreſs and continual hard uſage, loſe, by degrees, that nice ſenſe and perception with which GOD and nature endowed it:—Did this never happen;—or, was

it certain that ſelf-love could never hang the leaſt bias upon the judgment;—or, that the little intereſts below, could raiſe up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompaſs them about with clouds and thick darkneſs:—could no ſuch thing as favour and affection enter this ſacred court:—did WIT diſdain to take a bribe in it, or was aſhamed to ſhow its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment:—or, laſtly, were we aſſured, that INTEREST ſtood always unconcerned whilſt the cauſe was hearing,—and that PASSION never got into the judgment-ſeat, and pronounced ſentence in the ſtead of Reaſon, which is ſuppoſed always to preſide and determine upon the caſe:—was this truly ſo, as the objection muſt ſuppoſe, no doubt, then, the religious and moral ſtate of a man would be exactly what he himſelf eſteemed it;—and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better meaſure than the degrees of his own approbation or cenſure.

I own, in one caſe, whenever a man's Conſcience does accuſe him (as it ſeldom errs on that ſide) that he is guilty; and, unleſs in melancholy and hypochondriac caſes, we may ſafely pronounce, that there are always ſufficient grounds for the accuſation.

But, the converſe of the propoſition will not hold true,—namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conſcience muſt accuſe; and, if

does not, that a man is therefore innocent. —This is not fact:—so that the common consolation which some good Christian or other is hourly administering to himself,—that he thanks GOD his mind does not misgive him,—and that, consequently, he has a good Conscience, because he has a quiet one —As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at first sight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts,—you find it liable to so much error, from a false application of it,—the principle on which it goes, so often perverted,—the whole force of it lost, and sometimes so vilely cast away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man shall be vicious, and utterly debauched in his principles;—exceptionable in his conduct to the world;—shall live, shameless, in the open commission of a sin which no reason or pretence can justify;—a sin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within,—he shall ruin, for ever, the deluded partner of his guilt—rob her of her best dowry—and not only cover her own head with dishonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake. —Surely—you will think, Conscience must lead such a man a troublesome life:—he can have no rest, night or day, from its reproaches.

Alas! Conſcience had ſomething elſe to do, all this time, than break in upon him; as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this *domeſtic god* was either *talking, or purſuing, or was in a journey, or peradventure he ſlept, and could not be awoke.*—Perhaps he was gone out in company with HONOUR, to fight a duel;—to pay off ſome debt at play,—or dirty annuity, the bargain of his luſt.—Perhaps, Conſcience, all this time, was engaged at home, talking aloud againſt petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon ſome ſuch puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life ſecured him againſt all temptation of committing;—ſo that he lives as merrily—ſleeps as ſoundly in his bed—and, at the laſt, meets death with as much unconcern—perhaps much more ſo, than a much better man.

Another is ſordid, unmerciful;—a ſtrait-hearted, ſelfiſh wretch,—incapable either of private friendſhips, or public ſpirit.—Take notice how he paſſes by the widow and orphan in their diſtreſs; and ſees all the miſeries incident to human life without a ſigh or a prayer.—Shall not Conſcience riſe up and ſting him on ſuch occaſions? No.—Thank GOD, there is no occaſion.—'I pay every man his own;' —I have no fornication to anſwer to my' Conſcience,—no faithleſs vows or promiſes' to make up;—I have debauched no man's' wife or child.—Thank GOD, I am not as

' other men, adulterers, unjuſt, or even as ' this libertine, who ſtands before me.'

A third is crafty and deſigning in his nature.—View his whole life, it is nothing elſe but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable ſubterfuges, baſely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing, and the ſafe enjoyment of our ſeveral properties.—You will ſee ſuch a one, working out a frame of little deſigns upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man;—ſhall raiſe a fortune upon the inexperience of youth,—or the unſuſpecting temper of his friend, who would have truſted him with his life.—When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and ſtate it over again with his Conſcience——Conſcience looks into the *Statutes at Large*——finds, perhaps, no *expreſs law* broken by what he has done—perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurred—ſees no ſcourge waving over his head, or priſon opening its gate upon him.—What is there to affright his Conſcience?—Conſcience has got ſafely entrenched behind the letter of the law, ſits there invulnerable, fortified with *caſes* and *reports* ſo ſtrongly on all ſides,—that it is not preaching can diſpoſſeſs it of its hold.

Another ſhall want even this refuge,—ſhall break through all this ceremony of ſlow chicane—ſcorn the doubtful workings of ſecret plots and cautious trains to bring about his

purpoſe.—See—the barefaced villain, how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders——Horrid! But, indeed, much better was not to be expected in this caſe.—The poor man was in the dark!—his prieſt had got the keeping of his Conſcience,—and all he had let him know of it was, That he muſt believe in the *Pope*;—go to maſs;—croſs himſelf;—tell his beads:—be a good Catholic; and that this in all conſcience was enough to carry him to heaven. What!—if he perjures?—Why—he had a mental reſervation in it. But if he is ſo wicked and abandoned a wretch as you repreſent him,—if he robs, or murders, will not Conſcience, on every ſuch act, receive a wound itſelf?—Ay—but the man has carried it to confeſſion,—the wound digeſts there, and will do well enough,—and in a ſhort time be quite healed up by abſolution.

O *Popery!* what haſt thou to anſwer for!—when, not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itſelf above all things,—thou haſt wilfully ſet open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*—too apt, GOD knows, to go aſtray of himſelf,—and confidently ſpeak peace to his ſoul, when there is no peace.

Of this, the common inſtances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious, to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impoſſible

for man to be ſuch a bubble to himſelf,—I muſt refer him a moment to his reflections, and ſhall then venture to truſt the appeal with his own heart. Let him conſider in how different a degree of deteſtation, numbers of wicked actions ſtand *there;* though equally bad and vicious in their own natures—he will ſoon find, that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom have prompted him to commit, are generally dreſſed out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and a flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propenſity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurpriſed Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe,—we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done.—But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant ſervant, whom he ought to have loved and honoured, fell to make way for his luſt—where *Conſcience* had ſo much greater reaſon to take the alarm,—his heart ſmote him not.—A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of that crime ——to the time Nathan was ſent to reprove him; and we read not, once, of the leaſt ſorrow or compunction of heart, which he teſtified, during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conſcience, this once able monitor,—placed on high as a judge within us,—and intended, by our Maker, as a juſt and equitable one too—by an unhappy train of cauſes and impediments,—takes often ſuch imperfect cognizance of what paſſes—does its office ſo negligently—ſometimes ſo corruptly, that it is not to be truſted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a neceſſity, an abſolute neceſſity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern its determinations.

So that if you would form a juſt judgment, of what is of infinite importance to you not to be miſled in; namely, in what degree of real merit you ſtand, either as an honeſt man—an uſeful citizen—a faithful ſubject to your king—or a good ſervant to your GOD—call in RELIGION and MORALITY.—Look——What is written in the law of GOD?—How readeſt thou?—Conſult calm reaſon, and the unchangeable obligations of juſtice and truth—What ſay they?

Let Conſcience determine the matter upon theſe reports;—and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,—which is the caſe the Apoſtle ſuppoſes,—the rule will be infallible,—*Thou will have confidence towards God*;—that is, have juſt grounds to believe the judgment thou haſt paſſed upon thyſelf *is* the judgment of GOD, and nothing elſe but an anticipation of that righteous ſentence, which ſhall be pronounced hereafter upon thee, by that BEING, before

whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Bleſſed is the man, indeed, then, as the Author of the book of *Eccleſiaſticus* expreſſes it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his ſins.—Bleſſed is the man whoſe heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich*, continues he, *or whether he be poor,—if he have a good heart*, (a heart thus guided and informed)—*he ſhall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance;—his mind ſhall tell him more than ſeven watchmen that ſit above upon a tower on high.* In the darkeſt doubts, it ſhall conduct him ſafer than a thouſand caſuiſts; and give the ſtate he lives in, a better ſecurity for his behaviour, than all the clauſes and reſtrictions put together, which the wiſdom of the Legiſlature is forced to multiply,—forced, I ſay, as things ſtand; human laws being, not a matter of original choice, but of pure neceſſity, brought in to fence againſt the miſchievous effects of thoſe Conſciences which are no law unto themſelves: wiſely intending, by the many proviſions made,—in all ſuch corrupt or miſguided caſes, where principle and the checks of Conſcience will not make us upright,—to ſupply their force, and, by the terrors of gaols and halters, oblige us to it.

To have the fear of GOD before our eyes—and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal meaſures

of right and wrong:—the firſt of theſe will comprehend the duties of religion,—the ſecond, thoſe of morality; which are ſo inſeparably connected together, that you cannot divide theſe two *Tables*, even in imagination, (though the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking, and mutually deſtroying them both.

I ſaid, the attempt is often made;—and ſo it is;—there being nothing more common, than to ſee a man, who has no ſenſe at all of religion,—and, indeed, has *ſo much* of honeſty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bittereſt affront, ſhould you but hint at a ſuſpicion of his moral character,—or imagine he was not conſcientiouſly juſt and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite.

When there is ſome appearance that it is ſo,—though one is not willing even to ſuſpect the appearance of ſo great a virtue as moral honeſty;—yet, were we to look into the grounds of it, in the preſent caſe, I am perſuaded we ſhould find little reaſon to envy ſuch a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompouſly as he can on the ſubject, it will be found, at laſt, to reſt upon no better foundation than either his intereſt, his pride, his eaſe,—or ſome ſuch little and changeable paſſion, as will give us but ſmall dependence upon his actions in matters of great ſtreſs.

Give me leave to illuſtrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the phyſician I uſually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jeſt of it every day, and treat all its ſanctions with ſo much ſcorn and contempt, as to put the matter paſt doubt. Well,—notwithſtanding this, I put my fortune into the hands of the one,—and, what is dearer ſtill to me, I truſt my life to the honeſt ſkill of the other.—Now, let me examine what is my reaſon for this great confidence.—Why,—in the firſt place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power I put into their hands, to my diſadvantage. I conſider, that honeſty ſerves the purpoſes of this life;—I know their ſucceſs in the world depends upon the fairneſs of their characters,—that they cannot hurt me, without hurting themſelves more.

But, put it otherwiſe,—namely, that intereſt lay, for once, on the other ſide;—that a caſe ſhould happen, wherein the one, without ſtain to his reputation, could ſecrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world;—or, that the other could ſend me out of it, and enjoy an eſtate by my death, without diſhonour to himſelf or his art.—In this caſe, what hold have I of either of them?—Religion, the ſtrongeſt of all motives, is out of the queſtion.—Intereſt, the next moſt powerful

motive in this world, is ſtrongly againſt me. —I have nothing left to caſt into the ſcale, to balance this temptation.—I muſt ly at the mercy of Honour—or ſome ſuch capricious principle.—Strait ſecurity! for two of my beſt and moſt valuable bleſſings—my property and my life.

As, therefore, we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;—ſo, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality;—nor can any man be ſuppoſed to diſcharge his duties to GOD, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out that he does ſo), if he does not pay as conſcientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creature.

This is a point, capable, in itſelf, of ſtrict demonſtration.—Nevertheleſs, it is no rarity to ſee a man, whoſe real moral merit ſtands very low, who yet entertains the higheſt notion of himſelf, in the light of a devout and a religious man. He ſhall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honeſty:—yet, becauſe he talks loud againſt the infidelity of the age,—is zealous for ſome points of religion,—goes twice a day to church,—attends the ſacraments,—and amuſes himſelf with a few inſtrumental duties of religion,—ſhall cheat his conſcience into a judgment, that, for this, he is a religious man, and has diſcharged faithfully his duty to God: and you

will find, that such a man, through force of this delusion, generally looks down with spiritual pride upon every other man who has less affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself.

This is likewise a sore evil under the sun; and I believe there is no one mistaken principle, which, for its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the *Romish* church.—See—what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctioned by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition?—And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which set him loose from justice and humanity,—he showed none,—mercilessly trampled upon both,—heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries, in this matter, is not sufficient,—consider, at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to GOD, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me, for a moment, into the prisons of the Inquisition.—Behold *Religion*, with Mercy and Justice

chained down under her feet,—there ſitting ghaſtly upon a black tribunal, propped up with racks and inſtruments of torment.—Hark!—What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who uttered it, juſt brought forth to undergo the anguiſh of a mock trial, and endure the utmoſt pains that a ſtudied ſyſtem of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent.—Behold this helpleſs victim delivered up to his tormentors—his body ſo waſted with ſorrow and long confinement, you will ſee every nerve and muſcle as it ſuffers.—Obſerve the laſt movement of that horrid engine.—What convulſions it has thrown him into!—Conſider the nature of the poſture in which he now lies ſtretched.—What exquiſite torture he endures by it!—It is all nature can bear.—Good GOD! ſee how it keeps his weary ſoul hanging upon his trembling lips,—willing to take its leave, but not ſuffered to depart!—Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell—dragged out of it again to meet the flames—and the inſults in his laſt agonies, which this principle,—this principle, that there *can* be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The ſureſt way to try the merit of any diſputed notion,—is, to trace down the conſequences ſuch a notion has produced, and compare them with the *ſpirit* of Chriſtianity.—It is the ſhort and deciſive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for theſe and ſuch like

caſes—and is worth a thouſand arguments—*By their fruits*, ſays he, *ye ſhall know them.*

Thus, religion and morality, like faſt friends and natural allies, can never be ſet at variance, without the mutual ruin and diſhonour of them both;—and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no wellwiſher to either;—and, whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality as well as his religion will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this diſcourſe, than by two or three ſhort and independent rules, deducible from what has been ſaid.

1*ſt*, Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon, but his paſſions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are diſagreeable and troubleſome neighbours; and where they ſeparate, depend upon it, it is for no other cauſe but quietneſs take.

2*dly*, When a man thus repreſented, tells you, in any particular inſtance, that ſuch a thing goes *againſt* his conſcience,—always believe he means exactly the ſame thing as when he tells you ſuch a thing goes againſt his ſtomach,—a preſent want of appetite being generally the true cauſe of both.

In a word;—truſt that man in nothing,—who has not a good conſcience in every thing.

And, in your own caſe, remember this plain diſtinction, a miſtake in which has ruin-

ed thouſands,—That your conſcience is not a law;—no,—GOD and Reaſon made the law, and has placed Conſcience within you to determine,—not like an *Aſiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own paſſions;—but like a *Britiſh Judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,—but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

SERMON XXVIII.

TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

PROV. iii. 17.—*Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.*

THERE are two opinions which the inconſiderate are apt to take upon truſt.—The firſt is,—a vicious life is a life of liberty, pleaſure, and happy advantages.—The ſecond is—and which is the converſe of the firſt,—that a religious life is a ſervile and moſt uncomfortable ſtate.

The firſt breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was by the help of the firſt of theſe ſuggeſtions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, ſhe ſhould be as GOD, that is, ſhe ſhould reap ſome high and ſtrange felicity, from doing what was forbidden her.—But I need not repeat the ſucceſs.—Eve learned the difference between good and evil by her tranſgreſſion, which ſhe knew not before;—but then ſhe fatally learned at the ſame time, that the difference was only this,—that good is that which can only give the mind pleaſure and comfort—and that evil

is that which muſt neceſſarily be attended, ſooner or later, with ſhame and ſorrow.

As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race,—ſo has he carried it on, ever ſince, by the very ſame argument of deluſion;—that is, by poſſeſſing mens minds early with great expectations of the preſent incomes of ſin,—making them dream of wondrous gratifications they are to feel, in following their appetites in a forbidden way,—making them fancy, that their own grapes yield not ſo delicious a taſte as their neighbour's, and that they ſhall quench their thirſt with more pleaſure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at firſt too generally prevails,—till experience and proper ſeaſons of reflection make us all, at one time or other, confeſs—that our counſellor has been (as from the beginning) an impoſtor,—and that, inſtead of fulfilling theſe hopes of gain and ſweetneſs in what is forbidden—that, on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterneſs and loſs.

The ſecond opinion, or, That a religious life is a ſervile and uncomfortable ſtate, has proved a no leſs fatal and capital falſe principle in the conduct of inexperience through life,—the foundation of which miſtake ariſing chiefly from this previous wrong judgment,—that true happineſs and freedom lie in a man's always following his own humour,—that to

live by moderate and prescribed rules, is to live without joy,—that not to prosecute our passions, is to be cowards, and to forego every thing for the tedious distance of a future life.

Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleasure, but what should arise from that remote prospect,—I own, we are by nature so goaded on by the desire of present happiness, that, was that the case, thousands would faint under the discouragement of so remote an expectation.—But, in the mean time, the scriptures give us a very different prospect of this matter.—There we are told, that the service of GOD is true liberty,—that the yoke of Christianity is easy, in comparison of that yoke which must be brought upon us by any other system of living;—and the text tells of wisdom—by which is meant Religion, that it has pleasantness in its way, as well as glory in its end—that it will bring us peace and joy, such as the world cannot give.—So that, upon examining the truth of this assertion, we shall be set right in this error, by seeing that a religious man's happiness does not stand at so tedious a distance—but is so present, and, indeed, so inseparable from him, as to be felt and tasted every hour;—and, of this, even the vicious can hardly be insensible, from what he may perceive to spring up in his mind, from any casual act of virtue. And though it is a pleasure which properly belongs to the good,—yet let any one

try the experiment, and he will ſee what is meant by that moral delight, ariſing from the conſcience of well-doing.—Let him but refreſh the bowels of the needy,—let him comfort the broken-hearted—or check an appetite—or overcome a temptation—or receive an affront with temper and meekneſs,—and he ſhall find the tacit praiſe of what he has done, darting through his mind, accompanied with a ſincere pleaſure;—conſcience playing the monitor, even to the looſe and moſt inconſiderate, in their moſt caſual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whiſpering behind, and ſaying—This is the way of pleaſantneſs—this is the path of peace—walk in it.—

But, to do farther juſtice to the text, we muſt look beyond this inward recompence, which is always inſeparable from virtue,—and take a view of the outward advantages, which are as inſeparable from it, and which the apoſtle particularly refers to, when it is ſaid, Godlineſs has the promiſe of this life, as well as that which is to come:—and in this argument it is, that religion appears in all its glory and ſtrength—unanſwerable in all its obligations;—that beſides the principal work which it does for us, in ſecuring our future well-being in the other world, it is likewiſe the moſt effectual means to promote our preſent,—and that not only *morally*, upon account of that reward which virtuous actions

to entitle a man unto, from a juſt and a wiſe providence,—but by a natural tendency in themſelves, which the duties of religion have *to procure* us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all thoſe things wherein our temporal happineſs is thought to conſiſt,—and this not only in promoting the well-being of particular perſons, but of public communities, and of mankind in general,—agreeable to what the wiſe man has left us on record, that righteouſneſs exalteth a nation:—inſomuch, —that could we, in conſidering this argument, ſuppoſe ourſelves to be in a capacity of expoſtulating with GOD concerning the terms upon which we would ſubmit to his government—and to chooſe the laws ourſelves, which we would be bound to obſerve, it would be impoſſible for the wit of man to frame any other propoſals, which, upon all accounts, would be more advantageous to our own intereſts, than thoſe very conditions to which we are obliged by the rules of religion and virtue. And in this does the reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, and the beauty and wiſdom of providence, appear moſt eminently towards mankind, in governing us by ſuch laws, as do moſt apparently tend to make us happy,—and, in a word, in making that (in his mercy) to be our duty, which in his wiſdom he knows to be our intereſt,—that is to ſay, what is moſt conducive to the eaſe and comfort of our mind,—the health and ſtrength of

our body,—the honour and prosperity of our state and condition,—the friendship and good-will of our fellow-creatures;—to the attainment of all which, no more effectual means can possibly be made use of, than that plain direction,—to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right,—to use no deceit in our tongue, nor do evil to our neighbour.

For the better imprinting of which truth in your memories, give me leave to offer a few things to your consideration.

The first is,—that justice and honesty contribute very much towards all the faculties of the mind: I mean, that it clears up the understanding from that mist, which dark and crooked designs are apt to raise in it,—and that it keeps up a regularity in the affections, by suffering no lusts or *by-ends* to disorder them; that it likewise preserves the mind from all damps of grief and melancholy, which are the sure consequences of unjust actions; and that, by such an improvement of the faculties, it makes a man so much the abler to discern, and so much the more cheerful, active and diligent to mind his business. —Light is sown for the righteous, says the prophet, and gladness for the upright in heart.—

Secondly, let it be observed,—that in the continuance and course of a virtuous man's affairs, there is little probability of his falling

into conſiderable diſappointments or calamities;—not only becauſe guarded by the providence of GOD, but that honeſty is in its own nature the freeſt from danger.

Firſt, becauſe ſuch a one lays no projects, which it is the intereſt of another to blaſt, and therefore needs no indirect methods or deceitful practices, to ſecure his intereſt, by undermining others.—The paths of virtue are plain and ſtraight; ſo that the blind, perſons of the meaneſt capacity, ſhall not err.—Diſhoneſty requires ſkill to conduct it, and as great art to conceal—what it is every one's intereſt to detect. And I think I need not remind you, how oft it happens in attempts of this kind—where worldly men, in haſte to be rich, have over-run the only means to it—and, for want of laying their contrivances with proper cunning, or managing them with proper ſecrecy and advantage, have loſt for ever, what they might have certainly ſecured by honeſty and plain-dealing;—the general cauſes of the diſappointments in their buſineſs, or of unhappineſs in their lives, lying but too manifeſtly in their own diſorderly paſſions, which, by attempting to carry them a ſhorter way to riches and honour, diſappoint them of both for ever, and make plain, their ruin is from themſelves, and that they eat the fruits which their own hands have watered and ripened.

Conſider, in the third place, that the religious and moral man (one of which he can-

not be without the other) not only takes the ſureſt courſe for ſucceſs in his affairs, but is diſpoſed to procure a help which never enters into the thoughts of a wicked one: for, being conſcious of upright intentions, he can look towards heaven, and with ſome aſſurance recommend his affairs to GOD's bleſſing and direction:—whereas the fraudulent and diſhoneſt man, dares not call for GOD's bleſſing upon his deſigns,—or, if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it. Now, a man who believes that he has GOD on his ſide, acts with another ſort of life and courage, than he who knows he ſtands alone;—like Eſau, with his hand againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt his.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry,—but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil.

Conſider, in the fourth place, that in all good governments, who underſtand their own intereſt, the upright and honeſt man ſtands much fairer for preferment, and much more likely to be employed in all things where fidelity is wanted:—for all men, however the caſe ſtands with themſelves, they love at leaſt to find honeſty in thoſe they truſt; nor is there any uſage we more hardly digeſt, than that of being outwitted and deceived.—This is ſo true an obſervation, that the greateſt knaves have no other way to get into buſineſs,

but by counterfeiting honesty, and pretending to be what they are not; and when the imposture is discovered, as it is a thousand to one but it will, I have just said, what must be the certain consequence:—for, when such a one falls,—as he has none to help him,—so he seldom rises again.—

This brings us to a fifth particular, in vindication of the text,—That a virtuous man has this strong advantage on his side, (the reverse of the last), that the more and the longer he is known, so much the better is he loved—so much the more trusted,—so that his reputation and his fortune have a gradual increase;—and if calamities or cross accidents should bear him down—(as no one stands out of their reach in this world)—if he should fall, who would not pity his distress,—who would not stretch forth his hand to raise him from the ground!—wherever there was virtue, he might expect to meet a friend and a brother. And this is not merely speculation, but fact, confirmed by numberless examples in life, of men falling into misfortunes, whose character and tried probity have raised them helps, and bore them up, when every other help has forsook them.

Lastly, to sum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its side,—let us not forget that greatest of all happiness, which the text refers to,—in the expression, of all its paths being peace,—

peace and content of mind, arising from the conſciouſneſs of virtue, which is the true and only foundation of all earthly ſatisfaction; and, where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you beſtow upon a wicked man, they will as ſoon add a cubit to his ſtature as to his happineſs.—In the midſt of the higheſt entertainments,—this, like the handwriting upon the wall, will be enough to ſpoil and diſreliſh the feaſt:—but much more ſo, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over,—when all is ſtill and ſilent,—when the ſinner has nothing to do but attend its laſhes and remorſes;—and this, in ſpite of all the common arts of diverſion, will be often the caſe of every wicked man;—for we cannot live always upon the ſtretch;—our faculties will not bear conſtant pleaſure, any more than conſtant pain;—there will be ſome vacancies; and when there are, they will be ſure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections.—So that, ſetting aſide the great after-reckoning, the pleaſures of the wicked are over-bought, even in this world.—

I conclude with one obſervation upon the whole of this argument, which is this—

Nothwithſtanding the great force with which it has been often urged by good writers,—there are many caſes which it may not reach,—wherein vicious men may ſeem to enjoy their portion of this life,—and live as happy, and fall into as few troubles as other men:—

and therefore, it is prudent not to lay more ſtreſs upon this argument, than it will bear: —but always remember to call in to our aid, that great and more unanſwerable argument, which will anſwer the moſt doubtful caſes which can be ſtated,—and that is, the certainty of a future life, which Chriſtianity has brought to light. However men may differ in their opinions of the uſefulneſs of virtue for our preſent purpoſes,—no one was ever ſo abſurd, as to deny it ſerved our beſt and laſt intereſt, —when the little intereſts of this life were at an end:—upon which conſideration we ſhould always lay the great weight which it is fitteſt to bear, as the ſtrongeſt appeal, and moſt unchangeable motive that can govern our actions at all times. However, as every good argument on the ſide of religion, ſhould in proper times be made uſe of,—it is fit ſometimes to examine this,—by proving, virtue is not even deſtitute of a preſent reward,—but carries in her hand a ſufficient recompence for all the ſelf-denials ſhe may occaſion:—ſhe is pleaſant in the way,—as well as in the end;—her ways being ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace.—But it is her greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed glory,—that ſhe befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the laſt; —and this is a portion ſhe can never be diſinherited of:—which may GOD of his mercy grant us all, for the ſake of JESUS CHRIST.

SERMON XXIX.

OUR CONVERSATION IN HEAVEN.

PHILIP. iii. 20. 1ſt Part.——*For our converſation is in Heaven.*

THESE words are the concluſion of the account which St Paul renders of himſelf, to juſtify that particular part of his conduct and proceeding,—his leaving ſo ſtrangely, and deſerting his Jewiſh rites and ceremonies, to which he was known to have been formerly ſo much attached, and in defence of which he had been ſo warmly and ſo remarkably engaged. This, as it had been matter of provocation againſt him amongſt his own countrymen the Jews, ſo was it no leſs an occaſion of ſurpriſe to the Gentiles;—that a perſon of his great character, intereſt and reputation,—one who was deſcended from a tribe of Iſrael, deeply ſkilled in the profeſſions, and zealous in the *obſervances of the ſtraiteſt ſect of that religion;* who had their tenets inſtilled into him from his tender years, under the inſtitution of the ableſt maſters;—a Phariſee himſelf,—the ſon of a Phariſee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,—one that

was so deeply interested, and an accessory in the persecution of another religion, just then newly come up;—a religion to which his whole sect, as well as himself, had been always the bittereſt and most inveterate enemies, and were constantly upbraided as such, by the first founder of it:—that a person so beset, and hemmed in with interests and prejudices on all sides, should, after all, turn proselyte to the very religion he had hated;—a religion too, under the most universal contempt of any then in the world,—the chiefs and leaders of it men of the lowest birth and education, without any advantages of parts or learning, or other endowments to recommend them:—that he should quit and abandon all his former privileges, to become merely a fellow-labourer with these;—that he should give up the reputation he had acquired amongst his brethren, by the study and labours of a whole life;—that he should give up his friends,—his relations and family, from whom he estranged and banished himself for life:——this was an event so very extraordinary,—so odd and unaccountable,—that it might well confound the minds of men to answer for it.—It was not to be accounted for upon the common rules and measures of proceeding in human life.—

The apostle, therefore, since no one else could so well do it for him, comes, in this chapter, to give an explanation why he had thus forsaken so many worldly advantages,—

which was owing to a greater and more unconquerable affection to a better and more valuable interest;—that in the poor persecuted faith—which he had once reproached and destroyed—he had now found such a fulness of divine grace—such unfathomable depths of GOD's infinite mercy and love towards mankind, that he could think nothing too much to part with, in order to his embracing Christianity;—nay, he accounted all things but loss,—that is, less than nothing, for the excellency of the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST.

The apostle, after this apology for himself,—proceeds, in the second verse before the text, to give a very different representation of the worldly views and sensual principles of other pretending teachers,—who had set themselves up as an example for men to walk by, against whom he renews this caution:—For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies to the cross of CHRIST,—whose end is destruction,—whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things—φρονουντες—relish them, making them the only object of their wishes,—taking aim at nothing better, and nothing higher.—But *our* conversation, says he in the text, is in heaven.—We Christians, who have embraced a persecuted faith, are governed by other considerations,—have greater and nobler views.—Here we consider ourselves only as

pilgrims and ſtrangers;—our home is in another country, where we are continually tending: there our hearts and affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage ſhall be over, there ſhall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual reſt is deſigned and prepared for us for ever. Our converſation is in heaven, from whence, ſays he, we alſo look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto him.—It is obſervable, that St Peter repreſents the ſtate of Chriſtians, under the ſame image of ſtrangers on earth, whoſe city and proper home is heaven:—he makes uſe of that relation of citizens of heaven, as a ſtrong argument for a pure and holy life,—beſeeching them *as* pilgrims and ſtrangers *here*, as men whoſe intereſts and connexions are of ſo ſhort a date, and ſo trifling a nature,—to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul, that is, unfit it for its heavenly country, and give it a diſreliſh to the enjoyment of that pure and ſpiritualized happineſs, of which that region muſt conſiſt, wherein there ſhall in nowiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination.—The apoſtle tells us, that without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee GOD; by which, no doubt, he means, that a virtuous life is the only medium of happi-

neſs and terms of ſalvation,—which can only give us admiſſion into heaven.—But ſome of our divines carry the aſſertion farther, that without holineſs,—without ſome previous ſimilitude, wrought in the faculties of the mind, correſponding with the nature of the pureſt of Beings, who is to be the object of our fruition hereafter;—that it is not morally only, but phyſically impoſſible for it to be happy;—and that an impure and polluted ſoul, is not only unworthy of ſo pure a preſence as the Spirit of God, but even incapable of enjoying it, could it be admitted.

And here, not to feign a long hypotheſis, as ſome have done, of a ſinner's being admitted into heaven, with a particular deſcription of his condition and behaviour there,—we need only conſider, that the ſupreme good, like any other good, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment of it muſt require ſome qualification in the faculty, as well as the enjoyment of any other good does;—there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper, which will render that good a good to that individual,—otherwiſe, though (it is true) it may be poſſeſſed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.—

Preach to a voluptuous epicure, who knows of no other happineſs in this world, but what ariſes from good eating and drinking,—ſuch a one, in the apoſtle's language, whoſe god is his belly;—preach to him of the abſtrac-

tions of the soul;—tell of its flights, and brisker motion in the pure regions of immensity;—represent to him that saints and angels eat not,—but that the spirit of a man lives for ever upon wisdom and holiness, and heavenly contemplations:—why, the only effect would be, that the fat glutton would stare a while upon the preacher, and in a few minutes fall fast asleep.—No; if you would catch his attention, and make him take in your discourse greedily,—you must preach to him out of the Alcoran,—talk of the raptures of sensual enjoyments, and of the pleasures of the perpetual feasting which Mahomet has described;—there you touch upon a note which awakens and sinks into the inmost recesses of his soul;—without which, discourse as wisely and abstractedly as you will of heaven, your representations of it, however glorious and exalted, will pass, like the songs of melody, over an ear incapable of discerning the distinction of sounds.——

We see, even in the common intercourses of society,—how tedious it is to be in the company of a person whose humour is disagreeable to our own, though, perhaps, in all other respects, of the greatest worth and excellency.—How then can we imagine, that an ill disposed soul, whose conversation never reached to heaven, but whose appetites and desires, to the last hour, have grovelled upon this unclean spot of earth;—how can we ima-

gine it ſhould hereafter take pleaſure in GOD, or be able to taſte joy or ſatisfaction from his preſence, who is ſo infinitely pure, that he even putteth no truſt in his ſaints,—nor are the heavens themſelves (as Job ſays) clean in his ſight?—The conſideration of this, has led ſome writers ſo far, as to ſay, with ſome degree of irreverence in the expreſſion,—that it was not in the power of GOD to make a wicked man happy, if the ſoul was ſeparated from the body, with all its vicious habits and inclinations unreformed;—which thought, a very able divine in our church has purſued ſo far, as to declare his belief,—that could the happieſt manſion in heaven be ſuppoſed to be allotted to a groſs and polluted ſpirit, it would be ſo far from being happy in it, that it would do penance there to all eternity:—by which he meant, it would carry ſuch appetites along with it, for which there could be found no ſuitable objects. A ſufficient cauſe for conſtant torment;—for thoſe that it found there, would be ſo diſproportioned, that they would rather vex and upbraid it, than ſatisfy its wants.—This, it is true, is mere ſpeculation,—and what concerns us not to know;—it being enough for our purpoſe, that ſuch an experiment is never likely to be tried.—that we ſtand upon different terms with GOD,—that a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happineſs,—that as GOD has no pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall any evil dwell

with him;—and that, if we expect our happiness to be in heaven,—we must have our conversation in heaven, whilst upon earth,—make it the frequent subject of our thoughts and meditations,—let every step we take tend that way,—every action of our lives be conducted by that great mark of the prize of our high calling, forgetting those things which are behind;—forgetting this world,—disengaging our thoughts and affections from it, and thereby transforming them to the likeness of what we hope to be hereafter. How can we expect the inheritance of the saints in light, upon other terms than what they themselves obtained it?——

Can that body expect to rise and shine in glory, that is a slave to lust, or dies in the fiery pursuit of an impure desire? Can that heart ever become the lightsome seat of peace and joy, that burns hot as an oven with anger, rage, envy, lust and strife, full of wicked imaginations, set only to devise and entertain evil?

Can that flesh appear in the last day, and inherit the kingdom of heaven in the glorified strength of perpetual youth, that is now clearly consumed in intemperance,—sinks in the surfeit of continual drunkenness and gluttony, and then tumbles into the grave, and almost pollutes the ground that is under it?—Can we reasonably suppose, that head shall ever wear or become the crown of righteous-

neſs and peace, in which dwells nothing but craft and avarice, deceit, and fraud, and treachery,—which is always plodding upon worldly deſigns,—racked with ambition,—rent aſunder with diſcord,—ever delighting in miſchief to others, and unjuſt advantages to itſelf?—Shall that tongue, which is the glory of a man when rightly directed—be ever ſet to GOD's heavenly praiſes, and warble forth the harmonies of the bleſſed, that is now full of curſing and bitterneſs, backbiting and ſlander, under which is ungodlineſs and vanity, and the poiſon of aſps?

Can it enter into our hearts even to hope, that thoſe hands can ever receive the reward of righteouſneſs, that are full of blood, laden with the wages of iniquity, of theft, rapine, violence, extortion, or other unlawful gain? or that thoſe feet ſhall ever be beautiful upon the mountains of light and joy, that were never ſhod for the preparation of the goſpel,—that have run quite out of the way of GOD's word,—and made haſte only to do evil?—No, ſurely.—In this ſenſe,—he that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill,—and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.

So inconſiſtent is the whole body of ſin with the glories of the celeſtial body that ſhall be revealed hereafter,—that, in proportion as we fix the repreſentation of theſe glories upon our minds, and in the more numerous particulars we do it,—the ſtronger the neceſſity as

well as perſuaſion to deny ourſelves all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, as the only way to entitle us to that bleſſedneſs ſpoken of in the Revelation—of thoſe who do his commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and ſhall enter into the gates of the city of the living GOD, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels—to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born that are written in heaven, and to GOD the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect,—who have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

May GOD give us grace to live under the perpetual influence of this expectation,—that, by the habitual impreſſion of theſe glories upon our imaginations, and the frequent ſending forth our thoughts, and employing them on the other world, we may diſentangle them from this,—and by ſo having our converſation in heaven whilſt we are here, we may be thought fit inhabitants for it hereafter;—that when GOD, at the laſt day, ſhall come with thouſands and ten thouſands of his ſaints, to judge the world, we may enter with them into happineſs, and, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we may praiſe and magnify his glorious name, and enjoy his preſence for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXX.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD.

2 PETER iii. 11 ----*Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved*——*what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs? looking and haſtening unto the coming of God.*

THE ſubject upon which St Peter is diſcourſing in this chapter, is the certainty of Chriſt's coming to judge the world;—and the words of the text are the moral application he draws from the repreſentation he gives of it;—in which, in anſwer to the cavils of the ſcoffers in the latter days, concerning the delay of his coming, he tells them, that God is not ſlack concerning his promiſes, as ſome men count ſlackneſs, but is longſuffering to us-ward;—*that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up*——Seeing then, ſays he, all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy converſation

and godlineſs?—The inference is unavoidable, at leaſt in theory, however it fails in practice. ——How widely theſe two differ, I intend to make the ſubject of this diſcourſe; and though it is a melancholy compariſon, to conſider, "what manner of perſons we *really* "are," with "what manner of perſons we "*ought* to be," yet, as the knowledge of the one, is at leaſt one ſtep towards improvement in the other,—the parallel will not be thought to want its uſe.

Give me leave, therefore, in the firſt place, to recal to your obſervations, what kind of world it is we live in, and what manner of perſons we really are.

Secondly, and in oppoſition to this, I ſhall make uſe of the apoſtle's argument, and, from a brief repreſentation of the Chriſtian religion, and the obligations it lays upon us, ſhow, what manner of perſons we *ought* to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs, looking for, and haſtening unto the coming of the day of GOD.

Whoever takes a view of the world, will, I fear, be able to diſcern but very faint marks of this character, either upon the looks or actions of its inhabitants. Of all the ends and purſuits we are looking for, and haſtening unto, this would be the leaſt ſuſpected; for, without running into that old declamatory cant upon the wickedneſs of the age, we may ſay, within the bounds of truth, that there

is as little influence from this principle which the apoſtle lays ſtreſs on, and as little ſenſe of religion, as ſmall a ſhare of virtue (at leaſt as little of the appearance of it) as can be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all, in a country where it is countenanced by the ſtate. The degeneracy of the times has been the common complaint of many ages: how much we exceed our forefathers in this, is known alone to that GOD who trieth the heart. But this we may be allowed to urge in their favour,—they ſtudied at leaſt to preſerve the appearance of virtue; public vice was branded with public infamy, and obliged to hide its head in privacy and retirement. The ſervice of GOD was regularly attended, and religion not expoſed to the reproaches of the ſcorner.

How the caſe ſtands with us at preſent, in each of theſe particulars, it is grievous to report, and, perhaps, unacceptable to religion herſelf; yet, as this is a ſeaſon wherein it is fit we ſhould be told of our faults, let us for a moment impartially conſider the articles of this charge.

And, firſt, concerning the great article of religion, and the influence it has at preſent upon the lives and behaviour of the preſent times;—concerning which I have ſaid, that, if we are to truſt appearances, there is as little as can well be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all in a Chriſtian country.

Here I ſhall ſpare exclamations, and, avoiding all common-place railing upon the ſubject, confine myſelf to facts,—ſuch as every one who looks out into the world, and makes any obſervations at all, will vouch for me.

Now, whatever are the degrees of religion amongſt us,—whatever they are, the appearances are ſtrong againſt the charitable ſide of the queſtion.

If religion is any where to be found, one would think it would be amongſt thoſe of the higher rank in life, whoſe education, and opportunities of knowing its great importance, ſhould have brought them over to its intereſt, and rendered them as firm in the defence of it, as eminent in its example.—But, if you examine the fact, you will almoſt find it a teſt of a politer education, and a mark of more ſhining parts, to know nothing, and indeed, care nothing at all about it:—or, if the ſubject happens to engage the attention of a few of the more ſprightly wits, that it ſerves no other purpoſe, but that of being made merry at, and of being reſerved, as a ſtanding jeſt, to enliven diſcourſe, when converſation ſickens upon their hands.

This is too ſore an evil, not to be obſerved amongſt perſons of all ages, in what is called higher life; and ſo early does the contempt of this great concern begin to ſhow itſelf—that it is no uncommon thing to hear perſons diſputing againſt religion, and raiſing cavils

againſt the Bible, at an age when ſome of them would be hard ſet to read a chapter in it. And I may add, that, of thoſe whoſe ſtock in knowledge is ſomewhat larger, this, for the moſt part, has ſcarce any other foundation to reſt on, but the ſinking credit of traditional and ſecond-hand objections againſt revelation, which, had they leiſure to read, they would find anſwered and confuted a thouſand times over.—But this by the way.

If we take a view of the public worſhip of Almighty God, and obſerve in what manner it is reverenced by perſons in this rank of life, whoſe duty it is to ſet an example to the poor and ignorant, we ſhall find concurring evidence upon this melancholy argument—of a a general want of all outward demonſtration of a ſenſe of our duty towards God, as if religion was a buſineſs fit only to employ tradeſmen and mechanics—and the ſalvation of our ſouls, a concern utterly below the conſideration of a perſon of figure and conſequence.—

I ſhall ſay nothing at preſent of the lower ranks of mankind:—though they have not yet got into the faſhion of laughing at religion, and treating it with ſcorn and contempt, and, I believe, are too ſerious a ſet of creatures ever to come into it;—yet, we are not to imagine, but that the contempt it is held in by thoſe whoſe examples they are too apt to imitate, will, in time, utterly ſhake their principles, and render them, if not as pro-

ſane, at leaſt as corrupt as their betters.—When this event happens—and we begin to *feel* the effects of it in our dealings with them—thoſe who have done the miſchief will find the neceſſity, at laſt, of turning religious in their own defence, and, for want of a better principle, to ſet an example of piety and good morals, for their own intereſt and convenience.—

Thus much for the languiſhing ſtate of religion in the preſent age.——In virtue and good morals, perhaps, the account may ſtand higher.—

Let us inquire.—

And here, I acknowledge, that an unexperienced man, who heard how loudly we all talked in behalf of virtue and moral honeſty, and how unanimous we were all in our cry againſt vicious characters of all denominations, would be apt haſtily to conclude, that the whole world was in an uproar about it—and that there was ſo general an horror and deteſtation of vice amongſt us, that mankind were all aſſociating together to hunt it out of the world, and give it no quarter.—This, I own, would be a natural concluſion for any one, who only truſted his ears upon this ſubject. But, as matter of fact is allowed better evidence than hearſay—let us ſee, in the preſent, how the one caſe is contradicted by the other.—

However vehement we approve ourſelves in diſcourſe againſt vice—I believe no one is ignorant, that the reception it actually meets with is very different:—the conduct and behaviour of the world is ſo oppoſite to their language, and, all we hear, ſo contradicted by what we ſee, as to leave little room to queſtion which ſenſe we are to truſt.—

Look, I beſeech you, amongſt thoſe whoſe higher ſtations are made a ſhelter for the liberties they take, you will ſee, that no man's character is ſo infamous, nor any woman's ſo abandoned, as not to be viſited, and admitted freely into all companies, and, if the party can pay for it, even publicly to be courted, careſſed and flattered. If this will not overthrow the credit of our virtue—take a ſhort view of the general decay of it, from the faſhionable exceſſes of the age—in favour of which, there ſeems to be formed ſo ſtrong a party, that a man of ſobriety, temperance and regularity, ſcarce knows how to accommodate himſelf to the ſociety he lives in—and is oft as much at a loſs how and where to diſpoſe of himſelf;—and, unleſs you ſuppoſe a mixture of conſtancy in his temper, it is great odds but ſuch a one would be ridiculed and laughed out of his ſcruples and his virtue at the ſame time.—To ſay nothing of occaſional rioting, chambering and wantonneſs—conſider how many public markets are eſtabliſhed, merely for the ſale of virtue—where

the manner of going, too ſadly indicates the intention;—and the diſguiſe each is under, not only gives power ſafely to drive on the bargain, but too often tempts to carry it into execution too.—

This ſinning under diſguiſe, I own, ſeems to carry ſome appearance of a ſecret homage to virtue and decorum, and might be acknowledged as ſuch, was it not the only public inſtance the world ſeems to give of it.—In other caſes, a juſt ſenſe of ſhame ſeems a matter of ſo little concern, that, inſtead of any regularity of behaviour, you ſee thouſands who are fired with the very form of it, and who at length have even thrown the maſk of it aſide, as a uſeleſs piece of incumbrance.—This, I believe, will need no evidence;—it is too evidently ſeen in the open liberties taken every day, in defiance (not to ſay of religion, but) of decency and common good manners;—ſo that it is no uncommon thing to behold vices, which, heretofore, were committed only in dark corners, now openly ſhow their faces in broad day, and oft-times with ſuch an air of triumph, as if the party thought he was doing himſelf honour—or, that he thought the deluding an unhappy creature, and the keeping her in a ſtate of guilt, was as neceſſary a piece of grandeur as the keeping an equipage—and did him as much credit as any other appendage of his fortune.—

If we paſs on from the vices to the indecorums of the age, (which is a ſofter name for vices), you will ſcarce ſee any thing, in what is called higher life, but what beſpeaks a general relaxation of all order and diſcipline, in which our opinions, as well as manners, ſeem to be ſet looſe from all reſtraints—and, in truth, from all ſerious reflections too;—and one may venture to ſay, that gaming and extravagance, to the utter ruin of the greateſt eſtates—minds diſſipated with diverſions, and heads giddy with a perpetual rotation of them, are the moſt general characters to be met with;—and, though one would expect, that, at leaſt, the more ſolemn ſeaſons of the year, ſet apart for the contemplation of Chriſt's ſufferings, ſhould give ſome check and interruption to them; yet, what appearance is there ever amongſt us that it is ſo?—What one alteration does it make in the courſe of things?—Is not the doctrine of mortification inſulted by the ſame luxury of entertainments at our tables?—Is not the ſame order of diverſions perpetually returning, and ſcarce any thing elſe thought of?—Does not the ſame levity in dreſs, as well as diſcourſe, ſhow itſelf in perſons of all ages?—I ſay, of all ages—for, it is no ſmall aggravation of the corruption of our morals, that age, which, by its authority, was once able to frown youth into ſobriety and better manners, and keep them within bounds, ſeems but too often to

lead the way—and, by their unſeaſonable example, give a countenance to follies and weakneſſes, which youth is but too apt to run into, without ſuch a recommendation. Surely age, which is but one remove from death, ſhould have nothing about it but what looks like a decent preparation for it. In purer times, it was the caſe;—but now, grey hairs themſelves ſcarce ever appear, but in the high mode and flaunting garb of youth, with heads as full of pleaſure, and clothes as ridiculouſly, and as much in the faſhion, as the perſon who wears them is uſually grown out of it.—Upon which article, give me leave to make a ſhort reflection—which is this—that whenever the eldeſt equal the youngeſt in the vanity of their dreſs, there is no reaſon to be given for it, but that they equal them, if not ſurpaſs them, in the vanity of their deſires.

But this by the by—

Though in truth, the obſervation falls in with the main intention of this diſcourſe, which is not framed to flatter our follies, or touch them with a light hand, but plainly to point them out—that, by recalling to your mind what manner of perſons we really are, I might better lead you to the apoſtle's inference, of what manner of perſons ye ought to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs, —looking for, and haſtening unto, the coming of the day of GOD.

The apoſtle, in the concluding verſe of this argument, exhorts, that they who look for ſuch things, be diligent,—that they be found of him in peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs;—and one may conclude with him, that if the hopes or fears—either the reaſon or the paſſions of men, are to be wrought upon at all, it muſt be from the force and influence of this awakening conſideration in the text—"That all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved;"—that this vain and periſhable ſcene muſt change;—that we, who now tread the ſtage, muſt ſhortly be ſummoned away;—that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening unto the place from whence we ſhall return no more;—that whilſt we are here, our conduct and behaviour is minutely obſerved;—that there is a Being about our paths, and about our beds, whoſe omniſcient eye 'ſpies out all our ways, and takes a faithful record of all the paſſages of our lives;—that theſe volumes ſhall be produced and opened, and men ſhall be judged out of the things that are written in them;—that, without reſpect of perſons, we ſhall be made accountable for our thoughts, our words and actions, to this greateſt and beſt of Beings, before whoſe judgement-ſeat we muſt finally appear, and receive the things done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

That, to add to the terror of it—this day of the LORD will come upon us like a thief in the

night;—of that hour, no one knoweth:—that we are not ſure of its being ſuſpended one day, or one hour;—or, what is the ſame caſe—that we are ſtanding upon the edge of a precipice, with nothing but the ſingle thread of human life to hold us up;—and that if we fall unprepared in this thoughtleſs ſtate, we are loſt, and muſt periſh for evermore.

What manner of perſons we ought to be, upon theſe principles of our religion, St Peter has told us, in all holy converſation and godlineſs;—and I ſhall only remind, how different a frame of mind, the looking for, and haſtening unto the coming of GOD, under ſuch a life, is, from that of ſpending our days in vanity, and our years in pleaſure.

Give me leave, therefore, to conclude in that merciful warning which our SAVIOUR, the Judge himſelf, hath given us, at the cloſe of the ſame exhortation:—

Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, —and ſo that day come upon you unawares; —for as a ſnare ſhall it come upon all that dwell on the face of the whole earth.—Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man. Which may GOD of his mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXI.

ST PETER'S CHARACTER.

ACTS iii. 12.—*And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or, why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness, we had made this man to walk?*

THESE words, as the text tells us, were spoke by St Peter, on the occasion of his miraculous cure of the lame man, who was laid at the gate of the temple, and, in the beginning of this chapter, had asked an alms of St Peter and St John, as they went up together at the hour of prayer; on whom St Peter fastening his eyes, as in the 4th verse, and declaring he had no such relief to give him as he expected, having neither silver nor gold—but that such as he had, the benefit of that divine power which he had received from his Master, he would impart to him—he commands him forthwith, in the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, to rise up and walk. And he took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ancle-bones received strength; and he leaped

up, ſtood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, leaping, and praiſing God.

It ſeems he had been born lame, had paſſed a whole life of deſpair, without hopes of ever being reſtored; ſo that the immediate ſenſe of ſtrength and activity, communicated to him at once in ſo ſurpriſing and unſought-for a manner, caſt him into the tranſport of mind natural to a man ſo benefited beyond his expectation. So that the amazing inſtance of a ſupernatural power—the notoriety of the fact, wrought at the hour of prayer—the unexceptionableneſs of the object, that it was no impoſture, for they knew that it was he which ſat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple—the unfeigned expreſſions of an enraptured heart almoſt beſide itſelf, confirming the whole—the man that was healed, in the 10th verſe, holding his benefactors, Peter and John—entering into the temple with them, walking and leaping, and praiſing God—the great concourſe of people drawn together by this event, in the 11th verſe, for they all ran unto them, into the porch that was called Solomon's, greatly wondering—Sure never was ſuch a fair opportunity for an ambitious mind to have eſtabliſhed a character of ſuperior goodneſs and power. To a man ſet upon this world, who ſought his own praiſe and honour, what an invitation would it have been, to have turned theſe circumſtances to ſuch a purpoſe? to have fallen in with the

paſſions of an aſtoniſhed and grateful city, prepoſſeſſed, from what had happened, ſo ſtrongly in his favour already, that little art or management was requiſite to have improved their wonder and good opinion, into the higheſt reverence of his ſanctity, awe of his perſon, or whatever other belief ſhould be neceſſary to feed his pride, or ſerve ſecret ends of glory and intereſt. A mind not ſufficiently mortified to the world, might have been tempted here to have taken the honour due to GOD, and transferred it to himſelf. He might—not ſo a diſciple of Chriſt: for, when Peter ſaw it—when he ſaw the propenſity in them to be miſled on this occaſion, he anſwered, and ſaid unto the people, in the words of the text—Ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye ſo earneſtly on us, as though, by our own power and holineſs, we had made this man to walk?—the GOD of Abraham, and of Iſaac, and of Jacob, the GOD of our fathers, hath glorified his ſon JESUS.

O holy and bleſſed apoſtle!

How would thy meek and mortified ſpirit ſatisfy itſelf in uttering ſo humble and ſo juſt a declaration?—What an honeſt triumph wouldſt thou taſte the ſweets of, in thus conquering thy paſſion of vain-glory—keeping down thy pride—diſclaiming the praiſes which ſhould have fed it, by telling the wondering ſpectators, It was not thy own power—it was

not thy own holineſs which had wrought this, thou being of like paſſions and infirmities:—but that it was the power of the GOD of Abraham—the holineſs of thy dear LORD whom they crucified, operating by faith through thee, who waſt but an inſtrument in his hands? If thus honeſtly declining honour, which the occaſion ſo amply invited thee take—if this would give more ſatisfaction to a mind like thine, than the loudeſt praiſes of a miſtaken people—what true rapture would be added to it, from the reflection, that, in this inſtance of ſelf-denial, thou hadſt not only done well, but, what was a ſtill more endearing thought, that thou hadſt been able to copy the example of thy divine Maſter, who, in no action of his life, ſought ever his own praiſe, but, on the contrary, declined all poſſible occaſions of it?—and in the only public inſtance of honour which he ſuffered to be given him in his entrance into Jeruſalem—thou didſt remember—it was accepted with ſuch a mixture of humility, that the prediction of the prophet was not more exactly fulfilled in the hoſannas of the multitude, than in the meekneſs wherewith he received them, lowly, and ſitting upon an aſs. How could a diſciple fail of profiting by the example of ſo humble a maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this virtue, and, in every inſtance of it, ſhowed plainly, he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or gratify the carnal ex-

pectation of ambitious followers, which, had he affected external pomp, he might have accompliſhed, by engroſſing, as he could have done by a word, all the riches of the world, and, by the ſplendour of his court, and dignity of his perſon, had been greater than Solomon in all his glory, and have attracted the applauſe and admiration of the world? This, every diſciple knew was in his power.—So that the meanneſs of his birth, the toils and poverty of his life, the low offices in which he was engaged, by preaching the goſpel to the poor, the numberleſs dangers and inconveniences attending the execution, were all voluntary.—This humble choice, both of friends and family, out of the meanneſt of the people, amongſt whom he appeared rather as a ſervant than a maſter, coming not (as he often told them) to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter—and, as the prophet had foretold, in that mournful deſcription of him, having no form nor comelineſs, nor any beauty that we ſhould deſire him.—

How could a diſciple, you will ſay, reflect without benefit on this amiable character, with all the other tender pathetic proofs of humility, which his memory would ſuggeſt had happened of a piece with it, in the courſe of his Maſter's life; but particularly at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of it—at his crucifixion, the impreſſions of which could never be forgotten?—When a life full of ſo

many engaging inſtances of humility, was crowned with the moſt endearing one—of humbling himſelf to the death of the croſs—the death of a ſlave and a malefactor—ſuffering himſelf to be led like a lamb to the ſlaughter—dragged to Calvary without oppoſition or complaint, and, as a ſheep before his ſhearer is dumb, opening not his mouth.—

O bleſſed JESUS! well might a diſciple of thine learn of thee to be meek and lowly of heart, as thou exhorteſt them all, for thou waſt meek and lowly: well might they profit, when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded by ſuch an example!—It is not to be doubted what force this muſt have had on the actions of thoſe who were attendants and conſtant followers of our SAVIOUR on earth;—ſaw the meekneſs of his temper in the occurrences of his life, and the amazing proof of it at his death, who, though he was able to call down legions of angels to his reſcue, or by a ſingle act of omnipotence to have deſtroyed his enemies; yet ſuppreſſed his almighty power, neither reſented, or revenged the indignity done him, but patiently ſuffered himſelf to be numbered with the tranſgreſſors.

It could not well be otherwiſe, but that every eye-witneſs of this muſt have been wrought upon, in ſome degree, as the apoſtle, to let the ſame mind be in him which alſo was in CHRIST JESUS. Nor will it be diſputed how much of the honour of St Peter's be-

haviour, in the preſent tranſaction, might be owing to the impreſſions he received, on that memorable occaſion of his Lord's death, ſinking ſtill deeper, from the affecting remembrance of the many inſtances his maſter had given of this engaging virtue in the courſe of his life.

St Peter certainly was of a warm and ſenſible nature, as we may collect from the ſacred writings,—a temper fitteſt to receive all the advantages which ſuch impreſſions could give; and therefore, as it is a day and place ſacred to this great apoſtle, it may not be unacceptable, if I engage the remainder of your time in a ſhort eſſay upon his character, principally as it relates to this particular diſpoſition of heart, which is the ſubject of the diſcourſe.

This great apoſtle was a man of diſtinction amongſt the diſciples, and was one of ſuch virtues and qualifications, as ſeemed to have recommended him more than the advantage of his years or knowledge.

On his firſt admiſſion to our SAVIOUR's acquaintance, he gave a moſt evident teſtimony that he was a man of real and tender goodneſs, when, being awakened by the miraculous draught of fiſhes, as we read in the fifth of St Luke, and knowing the author muſt neceſſarily be from GOD, he fell down inſtantly at his feet,—broke out into this humble and pious reflection,—Depart from

me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord! The cenſure, you will ſay, expreſſes him a ſinful man; but ſo to cenſure himſelf, with ſuch unaffected modeſty, implies, more effectually than any thing elſe could, that he was not, in the common ſenſe of the word, a ſinful, but a good man, who, like the publican in the temple, was no leſs juſtified, for a ſelf-accuſation extorted merely from the humility of a devout heart, jealous of its own imperfections. And though the words, *depart from me*, carry in them the face of fear, yet he who heard them, and knew the heart of the ſpeaker, found they carried in them a greater meaſure of deſire. For Peter was not willing to be diſcharged from his new gueſt, but, fearing his unfitneſs to accompany him, longed to be made more worthy of his converſation. A meek and modeſt diſtruſt of himſelf, ſeemed to have had no ſmall ſhare, at that time, in his natural temper and complexion; and though it would be greatly improved, and, no doubt, much better principled, by the advantages on which I enlarged above, in his commerce and obſervation with his Lord and Maſter, yet it appears to have been an early and diſtinguiſhing part of his character. An inſtance of this, though little in itſelf, and omitted by the other evangeliſts, is preſerved by St John, in his account of our SAVIOUR's girding himſelf with a napkin, and waſhing the diſciples feet; to which office,

not one of them is repreſented as making any oppoſition: But when he came to Simon Peter,—the Evangeliſt tells,—Peter ſaid to him, Doſt *Thou* waſh my feet? JESUS ſaid unto him, What I do, thou knoweſt not now, but ſhalt know hereafter. Peter ſaid to him, Thou ſhalt never waſh my feet.—Humility for a moment triumphed over his ſubmiſſion, and he expoſtulates with him upon it, with all the earneſt and tender oppoſition which was natural to a humble heart, confounded with ſhame, that his Lord and Maſter ſhould inſiſt to do ſo mean and painful an act of ſervitude to him.

I would ſooner form a judgment of a man's temper, from his behaviour on ſuch little occurrences of life as theſe, than from the more weighed and important actions, where a man is more upon his guard,—has more preparation to diſguiſe the true diſpoſition of his heart, and more temptation, when diſguiſed, to impoſe it on others.

This management was no part of Peter's character, who, with all the real and unaffected humility which he ſhowed, was poſſeſſed of ſuch a quick ſenſibility and promptneſs of nature, which utterly unfitted him for art and premeditation; though this particular caſt of temper had its diſadvantages, at the ſame time, as it led him to an unreſerved diſcovery of the opinions and prejudices of his heart, which he was wont to declare, and

ſometimes in ſo open and unguarded a manner, as expoſed him to the ſharpneſs of a rebuke where he could leaſt bear it.

I take notice of this, becauſe it will help us in ſome meaſure to reconcile a ſeeming contradiction in his character, which will naturally occur here, from conſidering that great and capital failing of his life, when, by a preſumptuous declaration of his own fortitude, he fell into the diſgrace of denying his Lord; in both of which, he acted ſo oppoſite to the character here given, that you will aſk, How could ſo humble a man as you deſcribe, ever have been guilty of ſo ſelf-ſufficient and unguarded a vaunt, as that, though he ſhould die with his Maſter—yet would he not deny him?—Or whence,—that ſo ſincere and honeſt a man was not better able to perform it?—

The caſe was this—

Our LORD, before he was betrayed, had taken occaſion to admoniſh his diſciples of the peril of lapſing;—telling them, 31ſt verſe,—All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me this night.—To which Peter anſwering, with a zeal mixed with too much confidence,—That though all ſhould be offended, yet will I *never be offended*:—to check this truſt in himſelf,—our SAVIOUR replies, that he in particular would deny him *thrice*.—But Peter, looking upon this monition no farther than as it implied a reproach to his faith, and his love, and

his courage;—ſtung to the heart to have them called in queſtion by his Lord,—he haſtily ſummons them all up to form his final reſolution,—Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.—The reſolve was noble and dutiful to the laſt degree,—and, I I make no doubt, as honeſt a one—that is, both as juſt in the matter, and as ſincere in the intention, as ever was made by any of mankind;—his character not ſuffering us to imagine he made it in a braving diſſimulation;—no;—for he proved himſelf ſufficiently in earneſt by his ſubſequent behaviour in the garden, when he drew his ſword againſt a whole band of men, and thereby made it appear, that he had leſs concern for his own life, than he had for his Maſter's ſafety.—How then came his reſolution to miſcarry?—The reaſon ſeems purely this:—Peter grounded the execution of it upon too much confidence in himſelf,—doubted not but his will was in his power, whether GOD's grace aſſiſted him or not;—ſurely thinking, that what he had courage to reſolve ſo honeſtly, he had likewiſe ability to perform.—This was his miſtake;—and though it was a very great one,—yet it was in ſome degree akin to a virtue,—as it ſprung merely from a conſciouſneſs of his integrity and truth, and too adventurous a concluſion of what they would enable him to perform, on the ſharpeſt encounters, for his Maſter's ſake:—ſo that his failing in this point

was but a consequence of this hasty and ill-considered resolve;—and his Lord, to rebuke and punish him for it, did no other than leave him to his own strength to perform it:—which, in effect, was almost the same as leaving him to the necessity of not performing it at all.—The great apostle had not considered, that he who precautioned him was the Searcher of hearts,—and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man:—he did not remember, that his Lord had said before,—Without me ye can do nothing;—that the exertions of all our faculties were under the power of his will:—he had forgot the knowledge of this needful truth, on this one unhappy juncture,—where he had so great a temptation to the contrary,—though he was full of the persuasion in every other transaction of his life,—but most visibly here in the text,—where he breaks forth in the warm language of a heart still overflowing with remembrance of this very mistake he had once committed;—Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this,—as though by our own power or holiness, we had wrought this?—The GOD of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,—the GOD of our fathers, through faith in his name, hath made this man whole, whom ye see and know.—

This is the best answer I am able to make to this objection against the uniformity of the apostle's character which I have given:—up-

on which let it be added,—that, was no ſuch apology capable of being made in its behalf, —that the truth and regularity of a character, is not, in juſtice, to be looked upon as broken, from any one ſingle act or omiſſion which may ſeem a contradiction to it. The beſt of men appear ſometimes to be ſtrange compounds of contradictory qualities: and, were the accidental overſights and follies of the wiſeſt man,—the failings and imperfections of a religious man,—the haſty acts and paſſionate words of a meek man;—were they to riſe up in judgment againſt them,—and an ill-natured judge be ſuffered to mark in this manner what has been done amiſs,—what character ſo unexceptionable as to be able to ſtand before him?—So that, with the candid allowances which the infirmities of a man may claim, when he falls through ſurpriſe, more than a premeditation,—one may venture, upon the whole, to ſum up Peter's character in a few words,—He was a man ſenſible in his nature, —of quick paſſions, tempered with the greateſt humility and moſt unaffected poverty of ſpirit, that ever met in ſuch a character.—So that, in the only criminal inſtance of his life which I have ſpoken to, you are at a loſs which to admire moſt;—the tenderneſs and ſenſibility of his ſoul, in being wrought upon to repentance by a look from Jeſus;—or the uncommon humility of it, which he teſtified thereupon, in the bitterneſs of his ſorrow for

what he had done.—He was once presumptuous in trusting to his own strength; his general and true character was that of the most engaging meekness,—distrustful of himself and his abilities to the last degree.—

He denied his Master;—but, in all instances of his life, but that, was a man of the greatest truth and sincerity;—to which part of his character our SAVIOUR has given an undeniable testimony, in conferring on him the symbolical name of Cephas, a rock, a name the most expressive of constancy and firmness.—

He was a man of great love to his Master,—and of no less zeal for his religion: of which, from among many, I shall take one instance out of St John, with which I shall conclude this account:—Where, upon the desertion of several other disciples,—our Saviour putting the question to the twelve,—Will ye also go away?—Then, says the text, Peter answered and said,—Lord! whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,—and we believe, and know, that thou art Christ the Son of GOD.—Now, if we look into the gospel, we find what our Saviour pronounced on this very confession.

Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,—but my Father which is in heaven.—That our Saviour had the words of eternal life—Peter was able to deduce from principles of natural

reaſon; becauſe reaſon was able to judge, from the internal marks of his doctrine, that it was worthy GOD, and accommodated properly to advance human nature and human happineſs.—But, for all this,—reaſon could not infallibly determine that the meſſenger of this doctrine was the Meſſias, the eternal Son of the living GOD:—to know this, required an illumination;—and that illumination, I ſay, ſeems to have been vouchſafed at that inſtant as a reward—as would have been ſufficient evidence by itſelf of the diſpoſition of his heart.

I have now finiſhed this ſhort eſſay upon the character of St Peter, not with a lofty panegyric upon the power of his keys, or a ranting encomium upon ſome monaſtic qualifications, with which a popiſh pulpit would ring upon ſuch an occaſion, without doing much honour to the ſaint, or good to the audience,—but have drawn it with truth and ſobriety, repreſenting it as it was, as conſiſting of virtues the moſt worthy of imitation, —and grounded, not upon apocryphal accounts, and legendary inventions, the wardrobe from whence popery dreſſes out her ſaints on theſe days,—but upon matters of fact in the ſacred Scriptures, in which all Chriſtians agree.—And ſince I have mentioned *popery*, I cannot better conclude, than by obſerving, how ill the ſpirit and character of that church reſembles that particular part of St Peter's,

which has been made the subject of this discourse.—Would one think that a church, which thrusts itself under this apostle's patronage, and claims her power under him, would presume to exceed the degrees of it which he acknowledged to possess himself?—But how ill are your expectations answered, when, instead of the humble declaration in the text,—Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us, as if our own power and holiness had wrought this;—you hear a language and behaviour from the Romish court, as opposite to it as insolent words and actions can frame.

So that, instead of, Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us,—Ye men of Israel, *do* marvel at us,—hold us in admiration:—Approach our sacred pontiff,—(who is not only holy—but holiness itself):—approach his person with reverence, and deem it the greatest honour and happiness of your lives, to fall down before his chair, and be admitted to kiss his feet.—

Think not, as if it were not our own holiness which merits all the homage you can pay us.—It is our own holiness,—the superabundance of it, of which, having more than we know what to do with ourselves,—from works of supererogation, we have transferred the surplus in ecclesiastic warehouses, and, in pure zeal for the good of your souls, have established public banks of merit, ready to be drawn upon at all times.

Think not, ye men of Iſrael, or ſay within yourſelves, that we are unprofitable ſervants,—who have no good works to ſpare, or that, if we had—we cannot make this uſe of them,—that we have no power to circulate our indulgences,—and huckſter them out, as we do, through all the parts of Chriſtendom. —Know ye, by theſe preſents, that it is our own power which does this;—the plenitude of our apoſtolic power operating with our own holineſs, that enables us to bind and looſe, as ſeems meet to us on earth;—to ſave your ſouls, or deliver them up to Satan, and, as they pleaſe or diſpleaſe, to indulge whole kingdoms at once, or excommunicate them all;—binding kings in chains, and your nobles in links of iron.—

That we may never again feel the effects of ſuch language and principles,—may GOD of his mercy grant us, *Amen*.

SERMON XXXII.

THIRTIETH OF JANUARY.

EZRA ix. 6, 7.—*And I ſaid, O my God, I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God:—for our iniquities are increaſed over our head, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day.*

THERE is not, I believe, throughout all hiſtory, an inſtance of ſo ſtrange and obſtinately corrupt a people, as the Jews, of whom Ezra complains;—for though, on one hand,—there never was a people that received ſo many teſtimonies of GOD's favour to encourage them to be good;—ſo, on the other hand, there never was a people which ſo often felt the ſcourge of their iniquities, to diſhearten them from doing evil.

And yet, neither the one nor the other ſeemed ever able to make them either the wiſer or better;—neither GOD's bleſſings, nor his corrections, could ever ſoften them;—they ſtill continued a thankleſs, unthinking people,—who profited by no leſſons,—neither were to be won with mercies, nor terrified with puniſhments,—but, on every ſucceeding trial and occaſion, extremely diſpoſed againſt GOD, to go aſtray and act wickedly.

In the words of the text, the prophet's heart overflows with ſorrow, upon his reflection of this unworthy part of their character;—and the manner of his application to GOD, is ſo expreſſive of his humble ſenſe of it,—and there is ſomething in the words ſo full of tenderneſs and ſhame for them upon that ſcore,—as beſpeaks the moſt paternal, as well as paſtoral concern for them.—And he ſaid,—O my GOD, I am aſhamed—and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my GOD.—No doubt, the holy man was confounded to look back upon that long ſeries of ſo many of GOD's undeſerved mercies to them, of which they had made ſo bad and ungrateful a uſe:—he conſidered, that they had all the motives that could lay reſtraints, either upon a conſiderate or a reaſonable people;—that GOD had not only created, upheld, and favoured them with all advantages in common with the reſt of their fellow-creatures,—but had been particularly kind to them;—that when they were in the houſe of bondage, in the moſt hopeleſs condition,—he had heard their cry, and took compaſſion upon their afflictions, and, by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, had ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.—The prophet, no doubt, reflected at the ſame time, that beſides this inſtance of GOD's goodneſs, in firſt favouring their miraculous eſcape,—a ſeries of ſucceſſes, not to be accounted for from ſecond cauſes, and

the natural courſe of events, had crowned their heads in ſo remarkable a manner, as to afford an evident proof, not only of GOD's general concern, but of his particular providence and attachment to them above all people. In the wilderneſs he led them like ſheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye;—he ſuffered no man to do them wrong,—but reproved even kings for their ſake;—that when they entered into the promiſed land, no force was able to ſtand before them;—when in poſſeſſion,—no army was ever able to drive them out;—that nations, greater and mightier than they, were thruſt forth from before them;—that, in a word, all nature, for a time, was driven backwards by the hands of GOD, to ſerve them,—and that even the ſun itſelf had ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven to ſecure their victories;—that when all theſe mercies were caſt away upon them, and no principle of gratitude or intereſt could make them an obedient people—GOD had tried by misfortunes to bring them back;—that when inſtructions, warnings, invitations, miracles, prophets, and holy guides, had no effect,—he at laſt ſuffered them to reap the wages of their folly, by letting them fall again into the ſame ſtate of bondage in Babylon, from whence he had firſt raiſed them.—Here it is that Ezra pours out his confeſſion.—It was no ſmall aggravation to Ezra's concern, to find, that even this laſt trial had no good ef-

fect upon their conduct;—that all the alternatives of promiſes and threats, comforts and afflictions,—inſtead of making them grow the better,—made them apparently grow the worſe:—how could he intercede for them, but with ſhame and ſorrow; and ſay, as in the text, O my GOD, I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee,—for our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens;—ſince the days of our fathers have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day.—

Thus much for the prophet's humble confeſſion to GOD for the Jews, for which he had but too juſt a foundation given by them;—and I know not how I can make a better uſe of the words, as the occaſion of the day led me to the choice of them,—than by a ſerious application of the ſame ſad confeſſion, in regard to ourſelves.—

Our fathers, like thoſe of the Jews in Ezra's time, no doubt, have done amiſs, and greatly provoked GOD by their violence;—but if our own iniquities, like theirs, are increaſed over our heads;—if, ſince the days of our fathers, we have been in a great treſpaſs ourſelves unto this day,—it is fit this day we ſhould be put in mind of it;—nor can the time and occaſion be better employed, than in hearing with patience the reproofs which ſuch a parallel will lead me to give.—

It muſt be acknowledged, there is no nation which had ever ſo many extraordinary reaſons and ſupernatural motives to become thankful and virtuous, as the Jews had;—yet, at the ſame time, there is no one which has not ſufficient;—and, ſetting aſide at preſent the conſideration of a future ſtate as a reward for being ſo,—there is no nation under heaven, which, beſides the daily bleſſings of GOD's providence to them, but have received ſufficient bleſſings and mercies at the hands of GOD, to engage their beſt ſervices, and the warmeſt returns of gratitude they can pay.—There has been a time, may be, when they have been delivered from ſome grievous calamity,—from the rage of peſtilence or famine,—from the edge and fury of the ſword,—from the fate and fall of kingdoms round them:—they may have been preſerved, by providential diſcoveries, from plots and deſigns againſt the well-being of their ſtates,—or by critical turns and revolutions in their favour when beginning to ſink:—by ſome ſignal interpoſition of GOD's providence,—they may have reſcued their liberties, and all that was dear to them, from the jaws of ſome tyrant;—or may have preſerved their religion pure and uncorrupted, when all other comforts failed them.—

If other countries have reaſon to be thankful to GOD for any one of theſe mercies, much more has *this* of ours, which at one

time or other hath received them all;—insomuch, that our history, for this last century, has scarce been any thing else but the history of our deliverances, and GOD's blessings,—and these in so complicated a chain, and with so little interruption,—as to be scarce ever vouchsafed to any nation or language besides, —except the Jews;—and, with regard to them, though inferior in the stupendous manner of their working,—yet no way so in the extensive goodness of their effects, and the infinite benevolence which must have wrought them for us.—Here then let us stop, and look back a moment, and inquire, as in the case of the Jews, what great effects all this has had upon our lives,—and how far worthy we have lived—of what we have received!—

A stranger,—when he heard that this island had been so favoured by heaven,—so happy in our laws and religion,—so flourishing in our trade,—so blessed in our situation and natural product,—and in all of them so often—so visibly protected by Providence,—would conclude, our gratitude and morals had kept pace with our blessings;—and he would say,—as we are the most blessed and favoured,—that we must be the most virtuous and religious people upon the face of the earth.

Would to God! there was any other reason to incline one to so charitable a belief;—for, without running into any common-place declamation upon the wickedness of the age,

—we may ſay, within the bounds of truth,—that we have profited in this reſpect as little as it was poſſible for the Jews;—that there is as little virtue,—and as little ſenſe of religion, at leaſt as little of the appearance of it, as can be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all, in a country where it is countenanced by the ſtate.—Our forefathers, whatever greater degrees of real virtue they were poſſeſſed of,—GOD, who ſearcheth the heart,—beſt knows;—but this is certain,—in their days, they had at leaſt the form of godlineſs,—and paid this compliment to religion, as to wear at leaſt the appearance and outward garb of it.—The public ſervice of GOD was better frequented,—and in a devout, as well as regular manner;—there was no open profaneneſs in our ſtreets, to put piety to the bluſh,—or domeſtic ridicule, to make her uneaſy, and force her to withdraw.—

Religion, though treated with freedom, was ſtill treated with reſpect;—the youth of both ſexes kept under greater reſtraint;—good order and good hours were then kept up in moſt families; and, in a word, a greater ſtrictneſs and ſobriety of manners maintained throughout, amongſt people of all ranks and conditions;—ſo that vice, however ſecretly it might be practiſed,—was aſhamed to be ſeen.—

But all this has inſenſibly been borne down, ever ſince the days of our forefathers treſ-

paſs;—when, to avoid one extreme, we began to run into another;—ſo that, inſtead of any great religion amongſt us, you ſee thouſands who are tired even of the form of it, and who have at length thrown the maſk of it aſide—as an uſeleſs incumbrance.—

But this licentiouſneſs, he would ſay, may be chiefly owing to a long courſe of proſperity, which is apt to corrupt mens' minds.—GOD has, ſince this, tried you with afflictions;—you have been viſited with a long and expenſive war:—GOD has ſent, moreover, a peſtilence amongſt your cattle, which has cut off the flock from the fold,—and left no herd in the ſtalls.—Surely, he will ſay—two ſuch terrible ſcourges muſt have awakened the conſciences of the moſt unthinking part of you, and forced the inhabitants of your land—from ſuch admonitions—though they failed with the Jews, to have learned righteouſneſs for themſelves.—

I own this is the natural effect—and, one would hope, ſhould always be the natural uſe and improvement, from ſuch calamities;—for we often find, that numbers, who, in proſperity, ſeem to forget GOD, do yet remember him in the day of trouble and diſtreſs.—Yet, conſider this nationally,—we ſee no ſuch effect from it in fact, as one would be led to expect from the ſpeculation.—For inſtance,—with all the devaſtation, bloodſhed, and expence which the war has occaſioned,—

how many converts has it made to frugality,—to virtue, or even to ſerioufneſs itſelf?—The peſtilence amongſt our cattle,—though it has diſtreſſed and utterly undone ſo many thouſands, yet what one viſible alteration has it made in the courſe of our lives?—

And though one would imagine, that the neceſſary drains of taxes for the one,—and the loſs of rents and property from the other, ſhould, in ſome meaſure, have withdrawn the means of gratifying our paſſions, as we have done;—yet what appearance is there amongſt us that it is ſo?—

What one faſhionable folly or extravagance has been checked by it?—Is there not the ſame luxury and epicuriſm of entertainments at our tables?—do we not purſue with eagerneſs the ſame giddy round of trifling diverſions?—is not the infection diffuſed amongſt people of all ranks, and all ages?—And even grey hairs, whoſe ſober example and manners ought to check the extravagant ſallies of the thoughtleſs, gay, and unexperienced,—too often totter under the ſame coſtly ornaments, and join the general riot. Where vanity, like this, governs the heart, even charity will allow us to ſuppoſe, that a conſcioufneſs of their inability to purſue greater exceſſes, is the only vexation of ſpirit.—In truth, the obſervation falls in with the main intention of the diſcourſe,—which is not framed to flatter your follies, but plainly to point them out, and

ſhow you the general corruption of manners, and want of religion,—which all men ſee,—and which the wiſe and good ſo much lament.—

But the inquirer will naturally go on, and ſay, that though this repreſentation does not anſwer his expectations, that undoubtedly we muſt have profited by theſe leſſons in other reſpects;—that though we have not approved our underſtanding in the ſight of GOD, by a virtuous uſe of our misfortunes, to true wiſdom,—that we muſt have improved them, however, to political wiſdom:—ſo that he would ſay,—though the Engliſh do not appear to be a religious people,—they are at leaſt a loyal one:—they have ſo often felt the ſcourge of rebellion, and have taſted ſo much ſharp fruit from it,—as to have ſet their teeth on edge for ever.—But, good GOD! how would he be aſtoniſhed to find,—that though we have been ſo often toſſed to and fro by our own tempeſtuous humours,—that we were not yet ſick of the ſtorm!—that though we ſolemnly, on every return of this day, lament the guilt of our forefathers, in ſtaining their hands in blood,—we never once think of our principles and practices, which tend the ſame way!—and though the providence of GOD has ſet bounds, that they do not work as much miſchief as in days of diſtraction and deſolation,—little reaſon have we to aſcribe the merit thereof to our own wiſdom:—ſo

that, when the whole account is ſtated betwixt us,—there ſeems nothing to prevent the application of the words in the text,—That our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens. —Since the days of our fathers, have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day;—and though it is fit and becoming that we weep for them,—it is much more ſo, that we weep for ourſelves,—that we lament our own corruptions,—and the little advantages we have made of the mercies or chaſtiſements of GOD, —or from the ſins and provocations of our foreſathers.—

This is the fruit we are to gather, in a day of ſuch humiliation;—and unleſs it produces that for us, by a reformation of our manners, and by turning us from the error of our ways, —the ſervice of this day is more a ſenſeleſs inſult upon the memories of our anceſtors,—than an honeſt deſign to profit by their miſtakes and misfortunes,—and to become wiſer and better from our reflections upon them.—

Till this is done, it avails little, though we pray fervently to GOD not to lay their ſins to our charge,—whilſt we have ſo many remaining of our own.—Unleſs we are touched for ourſelves, how can we expect he ſhould hear our cry? It is the wicked corruption of a people which they are to thank, for whatever national calamities they feel;—this is the very ſtate we are in,—which, by diſ-

engaging Providence from taking our part,—will always leave a people expoſed to the whole force of accidents, both from within and without:—And, however ſtateſmen may diſpute about the cauſes of the growth or decay of kingdoms,—it is, for this cauſe, a matter of eternal truth,—that as virtue and religion are our only recommendation to GOD, that they are, conſequently, the only true baſis of our happineſs and proſperity on earth;—and, however we may ſhelter ourſelves under diſtinctions of party,—that a wicked man is the worſt enemy the ſtate has;—and, for the contrary, it will always be found, that a virtuous man is the beſt patriot, and the beſt ſubject the king has.—And though an individual may ſay, what will my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men?—I anſwer,—if it fail of a bleſſing here, (which is not likely), it will have one advantage,—it will ſave thy own ſoul, and give thee that peace at the laſt, which this world cannot take away.—

Which GOD, of his infinite mercy, grant us all. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIII.

ROMANS ii. 4.—*Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering—not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

So ſays St Paul. And,

ECCLES. viii. 11.—*Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.*——

TAKE either as you like it, you will get nothing by the bargain.—

It is a terrible character of the world, which Solomon is here accounting for—that their hearts are fully ſet in them to do evil.—And the general outcry againſt the wickedneſs of the age, in every age, from Solomon's down to this, ſhows, but too lamentably, what grounds have all along been given for the complaint.—

The diſorder and confuſion ariſing in the affairs of the world from the wickedneſs of it, being ever ſuch—ſo evidently ſeen—ſo ſeverely felt, as naturally to induce every one who was a ſpectator or a ſufferer, to give the

melancholy preference to the times he lived in; as if the corruptions of mens' manners had not only exceeded the reports of former days, but the power almoſt of riſing above the pitch to which the wickedneſs of the age was arrived.—How far they may have been deceived in ſuch calculations, I ſhall not inquire;—let it ſuffice, that mankind have ever been bad—conſidering what motives they have had to be better —and, taking this for granted, inſtead of declaiming againſt it, let us ſee whether a diſcourſe may not be as ſerviceable, by endeavouring, as Solomon has here done, rather to give an account of it, and, by tracing back the evils to their firſt principles, to direct ourſelves to the true remedy againſt them.—

Let it here only be premiſed—that the wickedneſs, either of the preſent or paſt times, whatever ſcandal and reproach it brings upon Chriſtians—ought not, in reaſon, to reflect diſhonour upon Chriſtianity, which is ſo apparently well framed to make us good—that there is not a greater paradox in nature—than that ſo good a religion ſhould be no better recommended by its profeſſors.—Though this may ſeem a paradox—it is ſtill, I ſay, no objection, though it has often been made uſe of againſt Chriſtianity; ſince, if the morals of men are not reformed, it is not owing to a defect in the revelation, but it is owing to the ſame cauſes which defeated all the uſe and

intent of reaſon—before revelation was given. —For, ſetting aſide the obligations which a divine law lays upon us—whoever conſiders the ſtate and condition of human nature, and upon this view, how much ſtronger the natural motives are to virtue than to vice, would expect to find the world much better than it is, or ever has been.—For, who would ſuppoſe the generality of mankind to betray ſo much folly, as to act againſt the common intereſt of their own kind, as every man does who yields to the temptation of what is wrong?—But, on the other ſide,—if men firſt look into the practice of the world, and there obſerve the ſtrange prevalency of vice, and how willing men are to defend, as well as to commit it—one would think they believed, that all diſcourſes of virtue and honeſty, were mere matter of ſpeculation, for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and ſay, truly, that men ſeemed univerſally to be agreed in nothing, but in ſpeaking well, and doing ill. But this caſts no more diſhonour upon reaſon, than it does upon revelation;—the truth of the caſe being this—that no motives have been great enough to reſtrain thoſe from ſin, who have ſecretly loved it, and only ſought pretences for the practice of it.—So that, if the light of the goſpel has not left a ſufficient proviſion againſt the wickedneſs of the world —the true anſwer is, that there can be none. It is ſufficient, that the excellency of Chriſti-

anity, in doctrine and precepts, and its proper tendency to make us virtuous, as well as happy, is a ſtrong evidence of its divine original:—And theſe advantages it has, above any inſtitution that ever was in the world;—it gives the beſt directions—the beſt examples—the greateſt encouragements—the beſt helps—and the greateſt obligations to gratitude.—But, as religion was not intended to work upon men by way of force and natural neceſſity—but by moral perſuaſion—which ſets good and evil before them;—ſo, if men have power to do evil, or chooſe the good, and will abuſe it, this cannot be avoided.—Not only religion, but even reaſon itſelf, muſt neceſſarily imply a freedom of choice;—and all the beings in the world, which have it, were created free to ſtand, or free to fall:—And therefore, men that will not be wrought upon by this way of addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to feel the ſtroke of that rod which is prepared for the back of fools, oft-times in this world, but undoubtedly in the next, from the hands of a righteous Governor, who will finally render to every man according to his works.

Becauſe this ſentence is not always executed ſpeedily, ariſes the wiſe man's account of the general licentiouſneſs which prevailed through the race of mankind—ſo early as his days;—and we may allow it a place amongſt the many other fatal cauſes of depravation in our

own; a few of which I shall beg leave to add to this explication of the wise man's; subjoining a few practical cautions in relation to each, as I go along.—

To begin with Solomon's account in the text—that, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.—

It seems somewhat hard to understand the consequence, why men should grow more desperately wicked, because GOD is merciful, and gives them space to repent;—this is no natural effect, nor does the wise man intend to insinuate, that the goodness and long-suffering of GOD is the cause of the wickedness of man, by a direct efficacy to harden sinners in their course. But the scope of his discourse is this—Because a vicious man escapes at present, he is apt to draw false conclusions from it; and, from the delay of GOD's punishments in this life, either to conceive them at so remote a distance, or, perhaps, so uncertain, that, though he has some doubtful misgivings of the future, yet he hopes, in the main, that his fears are greater than his danger; and, from observing some of the worst of men both live and die, without any outward testimony of GOD's wrath, draws from thence some flattering ground of encouragement for himself, and, with the wicked in the psalm, says in his heart, Tush, I shall

never be caſt down,—there ſhall no harm happen unto me:—as if it was neceſſary, if GOD is to puniſh at all, that he muſt do it preſently;—which, by the way, would rather ſeem to beſpeak the rage and fury of an incenſed party, than the determination of a wiſe and patient judge, who reſpites puniſhment to another ſtate, declaring, for the wiſeſt reaſons, this is not the time for it to take place in—but that he has appointed a day for it, wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and make ſuch unalterable diſtinctions betwixt the good and bad—as to render his future judgement a full vindication of his juſtice.

That mankind have ever made an ill uſe of this forbearance, is, and I fear will ever be, the caſe:—and St Peter, in his deſcription of the ſcoffers in the latter days, who, he tells us, ſhall walk after their own luſts, (the worſt of all characters), gives the ſame ſad ſolution of what ſhould be their unhappy encouragement; for, that they would ſay—Where is the promiſe [where is the threatening, or declaration, of ἡ παρουσία] of his coming? for, ſince the fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;—that is, the world goes on in the ſame uninterrupted courſe, where all things fall alike to all, without any interpoſition from above, or any outward token of divine diſpleaſure: Upon this ground, "Come ye," ſay they, as the prophet repreſents them,

will fetch wine, and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong drink; and to-morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Now, if you conſider, you will find, that all this falſe way of reaſoning doth ariſe from that groſs piece of ſelf-flattery, that ſuch do imagine GOD to be like themſelves—that is, as cruel and revengeful as they are;—and they preſently think, if a fellow-creature offended them at the rate that ſinners are ſaid to offend GOD, and they had as much power in their hands to puniſh and torture them as he has, they would be ſure to execute it ſpeedily;—but becauſe they ſee GOD does it not, —therefore, they conclude, that all the talk of GOD's anger againſt vice, and his future puniſhment of it—is mere talk, calculated for the terror of old women and children.—Thus ſpeak they peace to their ſouls, when there is no peace;—for, though a ſinner (which the wiſe man adds by way of caution after the text)—for, though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged upon the earth—yet, ſure I know, that it ſhall be well with them that fear GOD—but ſhall not be well with the wicked. Upon which argument, the pſalmiſt, ſpeaking in the name of GOD, uſes this remonſtrance to one under this fatal miſtake, which has miſled thouſands—Theſe things thou didſt, and I kept ſilence: —And it ſeems this ſilence was interpreted into conſent;—for, it follows—"and thou

thoughteſt I was altogether ſuch a one as thyſelf:"—but the pſalmiſt adds, how ill he took this at mens' hands, and that they ſhould not know the difference between the forbearance of ſinners—and his neglect of their ſins;—"but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thee."—Upon the whole of which, he bids them be better adviſed, and conſider, leſt, while they forget GOD, he pluck them away, and there be none to deliver them.—

Thus much for the firſt ground and cauſe which the text gives, why the hearts of the ſons of men are ſo fully ſet in them to do evil; upon which, I have only one or two cautions to add—that, in the firſt place, we frequently deceive ourſelves in the calculation, that ſentence ſhall not be ſpeedily executed.—By ſad experience, vicious and debauched men find this matter to turn out very different in practice, from their expectations in theory;—GOD having ſo contrived the nature of things, throughout the whole ſyſtem of moral duties,—that every vice, in ſome meaſure, ſhould immediately revenge itſelf upon the doer;—that falſehood, and unfair dealing, ends in diſtruſt and diſhonour;—that drunkenneſs and debauchery ſhould weaken the thread of life, and cut it ſo ſhort, that the tranſgreſſor ſhall not live out half his days;—that pride ſhould be followed by mortifications—extravagance by poverty and diſtreſs;—that the revengeful and malicious ſhould be the greateſt tormentor

of himſelf—the perpetual diſturbance of his own mind being ſo immediate a chaſtiſement, as to verify what the wiſe man ſays upon it—that, as the merciful man does good to his own ſoul, ſo, he that is cruel, troubleth his own fleſh.

In all which caſes, there is a puniſhment independent of theſe, and that is, the puniſhment which a man's own mind takes upon itſelf, from the remorſe of doing what is wrong. —*Prima eſt hæc ultio*—this is the firſt revenge, which (whatever other puniſhments he may eſcape) is ſure to follow cloſe upon his heels, and haunts him whereſoever he goes;—for, whenever a man commits a wilful bad action—he drinks down poiſon, which, though it may work ſlowly, will work ſurely, and give him perpetual pains and heartaches—and, if no means be uſed to expel it, will deſtroy him at laſt. So that, notwithſtanding that final ſentence of GOD is not executed ſpeedily, in exact weight and meaſure, there is, nevertheleſs, a ſentence executed, which a man's own conſcience pronounces againſt him;—and every wicked man, I believe, feels as regular a proceſs within his own breaſt, commenced againſt himſelf—and finds himſelf as much accuſed, and as evidently and impartially condemned for what he has done amiſs, as if he had received ſentence before the moſt awful tribunal;—which judgement of conſcience, as it can be looked upon in no other light but as

an anticipation of that righteous and unalterable ſentence which will be pronounced hereafter by that Being, to whom he is finally to give an account of his actions—I cannot conceive the ſtate of his mind, under any character, than of that anxious doubtfulneſs deſcribed by the prophet—that the wicked are like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and filth.

A ſecond caution againſt this uniform ground of falſe hope, in ſentence not being executed ſpeedily, will ariſe from this conſideration—that, in our vain calculation of this diſtant point of retribution, we generally reſpite it to the day of judgement;—and, as that may be a thouſand, or ten thouſand years off, it proportionably leſſens the terror. To rectify this miſtake, we ſhould firſt conſider, that the diſtance of a thing noway alters the nature of it: - 2dly, that we are deceived in this diſtant proſpect, not conſidering, that, however far off we may fix it in this belief, that, in fact, it is no farther off from every man, than the day of his own death—and, how certain that day is, we need not ſurely be reminded:—it is the certainty of the matter, and of an event which will as ſurely come to paſs, as that the ſun ſhall riſe to-morrow morning—— that ſhould enter as much into our calculations, as if it was hanging over our heads.—For though, in our fond imaginations, we dream of living many years upon

the earth;—how unexpectedly are we ſummoned from it!—How oft, in the ſtrength of our age, in the midſt of our projects, when we are promiſing ourſelves the eaſe of many years!—How oft, at that very time, and in the height of this imagination, is the decree ſealed, and the commandment gone forth, to call us into another world!

This may ſuffice for the examination of this one great cauſe of the corruption of the world;—from whence I ſhould proceed, as I purpoſed, to an inquiry after ſome other unhappy cauſes, which have a ſhare in this evil. —But I have taken up ſo much more of your time in this, than I firſt intended, that I ſhall defer what I have to ſay to the next occaſion, and put an end to this diſcourſe, by an anſwer to a queſtion often aſked, relatively to this argument in prejudice of Chriſtianity, which cannot be more ſeaſonably anſwered than in a diſcourſe at this time;—and that is, Whether the Chriſtian religion has done the world any ſervice, in reforming the lives and morals of mankind, which ſome, who pretend to have conſidered the preſent ſtate of vice, ſeem to doubt of?—This objection I, in ſome meaſure, have anticipated in the beginning of this diſcourſe;—and what I have to add to that argument is this—that, as it is impoſſible to decide the point by evidence of facts, which, at ſo great a diſtance, cannot be brought together and compared, it muſt be

decided by reaſon and the probability of things;—upon which iſſue, one might appeal to the moſt profeſſed deiſt, and truſt him to determine—whether the lives of thoſe who are ſet looſe from all obligations but thoſe of conveniency, can be compared with thoſe who have been bleſſed with the extraordinary light of a religion?—and, whether ſo juſt and holy a religion as the Chriſtian, which ſets reſtraints even upon our thoughts;—a religion which gives us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of GOD—at the ſame time that it impreſſes the moſt awful ones of his majeſty and power;—a Being rich in mercies, but, if they are abuſed, terrible in his judgements;—one conſtantly about our ſecret paths—about our beds;—who ſpieth out all our ways—noticeth all our actions;—and is ſo pure in his nature, that he will puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and has appointed a day wherein he will enter into this inquiry, and execute judgement according as we have deſerved?

If either the hopes or fears, the paſſions or reaſon of men, are to be wrought upon at all, ſuch principles muſt have an effect, though, I own, very far ſhort of what a thinking man ſhould expect from ſuch motives.

No doubt, there is great room for amendment in the Chriſtian world; and the profeſſors of our holy religion, may, in general, be ſaid to be a very corrupt and bad generation of

men, considering what reasons and obligations they have to be better.—Yet still I affirm, if those restraints were lessened,—the world would be infinitely worse;—and therefore, we cannot sufficiently bless and adore the goodness of GOD, for those advantages brought by the coming of CHRIST;—which GOD grant that we may live to be more deserving of; that, in the last day, when he shall come again to judge the world, we may rise to life immortal. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIV.

TRUST IN GOD.

PSAL. XXXVII. 3.—*Put thou thy truſt in the Lord.*——

WHOEVER ſeriouſly reflects upon the ſtate and condition of man, and looks upon that dark ſide of it, which repreſents his life as open to ſo many cauſes of trouble;—when he ſees how often he eats the bread of affliction, and that he is born to it as naturally as the ſparks fly upwards;—that no rank or degrees of men are exempted from this law of our beings,—but that all, from the high cedar of Libanus to the humble ſhrub upon the wall, are ſhook in their turns by numberleſs calamities and diſtreſſes:—when one ſits down and looks upon this gloomy ſide of things, with all the ſorrowful changes and chances which ſurround us:—at firſt ſight, would not one wonder, how the ſpirit of a man could bear the infirmities of his nature, and what it is that ſupports him, as it does, under the many evil accidents which he meets with in his paſſage through this valley of

tears? Without ſome certain aid within us to bear us up, ſo tender a frame as ours, would be but ill fitted to encounter what generally befals it in this rugged journey: and accordingly we find, that we are ſo curiouſly wrought by an all-wiſe hand, with a view to this, that, in the very compoſition and texture of our nature, there is a remedy and proviſion left againſt moſt of the evils we ſuffer; we being ſo ordered, that the principle of ſelf-love, given us for preſervation, comes in here to our aid, by opening a door of hope, and, in the worſt emergencies, flattering us with a belief, that we ſhall extricate ourſelves, and live to ſee better days.

This expectation, though in fact it no way alters the nature of the croſs-accidents to which we ly open, or does at all pervert the courſe of them, yet impoſes upon the ſenſe of them, and, like a ſecret ſpring in a well-contrived machine, though it cannot prevent, at leaſt it counterbalances the preſſure, and ſo bears up this tottering tender frame, under many a violent ſhock and hard joſtling, which otherwiſe would unavoidably overwhelm it. Without ſuch an inward reſource, from an inclination, which is natural to man, to truſt and hope for redreſs in the moſt deplorable conditions,—his ſtate in this life would be, of all creatures, the moſt miſerable. When his mind was either wrung with affliction, or his body lay tortured with the gout or ſtone,—

did he think, that, in this world, there ſhould be no reſpite to his ſorrow,—could he believe, the pains he endured would continue equally intenſe—without remedy—without intermiſſion;—with what deplorable lamentation would he languiſh out his day,—and how ſweet, as JOB ſays, would the *clods of the valley be to him?* But ſo ſad a perſuaſion, whatever grounds there may be ſometimes for it, ſcarce ever gets full poſſeſſion of the mind of man, which, by nature, ſtruggles againſt deſpair; ſo that whatever part of us ſuffers, the darkeſt mind inſtantly uſhers in this relief to it, points out to hope, encourages to build, though on a ſandy foundation, and raiſes an expectation in us, that things will come to a fortunate iſſue. And indeed it is ſomething ſurpriſing to conſider the ſtrange force of this paſſion;—what wonders it has wrought in ſupporting mens ſpirits in all ages, and under ſuch inextricable difficulties, that they have ſometimes hoped, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, even againſt hope,—againſt all likelihood; and have looked forwards with comfort under misfortunes, when there has been little or nothing to favour ſuch an expectation.

This flattering propenſity in us, which I have here repreſented, as it is built upon one of the moſt deceitful of human paſſions,—that is, ſelf-love, which, at all times, inclines us to think better of ourſelves, and conditions, than there is ground for; how great ſoever

the relief is, which a man draws from it at preſent, it too often diſappoints in the end, leaving him to go on his way ſorrowing,—mourning, as the prophet ſays, that his hope is loſt. So that, after all, in our ſeverer trials, we ſtill find a neceſſity of calling in ſomething to aid this principle, and direct it ſo, that it may not wander with this uncertain expectation of what may never be accompliſhed, but fix itſelf upon a proper object of truſt and reliance, that is able to fulfil our deſires, to hear our cry, and to help us. The paſſion of hope, without this, though in ſtraits a man may ſupport his ſpirits for a time with a general expectation of better fortune; yet, like a ſhip toſſed without a pilot upon a troubleſome ſea, it may float upon the ſurface for a while, but is never, never likely to be brought to the haven where it would be. To accompliſh this, Reaſon and Religion are called in at length, and join with Nature in exhorting us to hope;—but to hope in GOD, in whoſe hands are the iſſues of life and death;—and without whoſe knowledge and permiſſion we know that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground. Strengthened with this anchor of hope, which keeps us ſtedfaſt,—when the rains deſcend, and the floods come upon us,—however the ſorrows of a man are multiplied, he bears up his head, looks towards heaven with confidence, waiting for the ſalvation of GOD: he then builds upon a

rock, againſt which the gates of hell cannot prevail. He may be troubled, it is true, on every ſide, but ſhall not be diſtreſſed,—perplexed, yet not in deſpair: though he walks through the valley of the ſhadow of death, even then he fears no evil; this rod and this ſtaff comfort him.

The virtue of this had been ſufficiently tried by David, and had no doubt, been of uſe to him in the courſe of a life full of afflictions; many of which were ſo great, that he declares, that he ſhould verily have fainted under the ſenſe and apprehenſion of them, but that he believed to ſee the goodneſs of the Lord in the land of the living. He believed!—how could he do otherwiſe? He had all the conviction that reaſon and inſpiration could give him,—that there was a Being, in whom every thing concurred which could be the proper object of truſt and confidence; power to help, and goodneſs always to incline him to do it. He knew this infinite Being, though his dwelling was ſo high, that his glory was above the heavens, yet humbled himſelf to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth: that he was not an idle and diſtant ſpectator of what paſſed there, but that he was a preſent help in time of trouble: that he bowed the heavens, and came down to overrule the courſe of things; —delivering the poor, and him that was in miſery, from him that was too ſtrong for

him;—lifting the ſimple out of his diſtreſs, and guarding him by his providence, ſo that no man ſhould do him wrong;—that neither the ſun ſhould ſmite him by day, neither the moon by night. Of this the pſalmiſt had ſuch evidence from his obſervation on the life of others, with the ſtrongeſt conviction, at the ſame time, which a long life, full of perſonal deliverances, could give,—all which taught him the value of the leſſon in the text, from which he had received ſo much encouragement himſelf,—that he tranſmits it for the benefit of the whole race of mankind after him, to ſupport them, as it had done him, under the afflictions which befel him.

Truſt in God;——as if he had ſaid, Whoſoever thou art, that ſhall hereafter fall into any ſuch ſtraits or troubles as I have experienced,—learn, by my example, where to ſeek for ſuccour;—truſt not in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them: the ſons of men, who are of low degree, are vanity, and are not able to help thee;—men of high degree are a lie, too often deceive thy hopes, and will not help thee: but thou, when thy ſoul is in heavineſs, turn thy eyes from the earth, and look up towards heaven, to that infinitely kind and powerful Being, who neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth; who is a preſent help in time of trouble:—deſpond not, and ſay within thyſelf, why his chariot wheels ſtay ſo long?—and why he

vouchſafeth thee not a ſpeedy relief?—but arm thyſelf, in thy misfortunes, with patience and fortitude;—truſt in GOD, who ſees all thoſe conflicts under which thou laboureſt;—who knows thy neceſſities afar off, and puts all thy tears into his bottle;—who ſees every careful thought and penſive look, and hears every ſigh and melancholy groan thou uttereſt.

In all thy exigencies, truſt and depend on him; nor ever doubt, but he, who heareth the cry of the fatherleſs, and defendeth the cauſe of the widow, if it is juſt, will hear thine,—and either lighten thy burden, and let thee go free,—or, which is the ſame, if that ſeems not meet, by adding ſtrength to thy mind, to enable thee to ſuſtain what he has ſuffered to be laid upon thee.

Whoever recollects the particular pſalms ſaid to be compoſed by this great man, under the ſeveral diſtreſſes and croſs-accidents of his life, will perceive the juſtice of this paraphraſe, which is agreeable to the ſtrain of reaſoning—which runs through—which is little elſe than a recollection of his own words and thoughts upon thoſe occaſions, in all which he appears to have been no leſs ſignal in his afflictions, than in his piety, and in that goodneſs of ſoul which he diſcovers under them. I ſaid, the reflections upon his own life, and providential eſcapes which he had experienced, had had a ſhare in forming thoſe religious ſentiments of truſt in his mind, which

had ſo early taken root, that when he was going to fight the Philiſtine, when he was but a youth, and ſtood before Saul, he had already learned to argue in this manner:—Let no man's heart fail him;—thy ſervant kept his father's ſheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and ſmote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he aroſe againſt me, I caught him by the beard, and ſmote him, and ſlew him;—thy ſervant ſlew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumciſed Philiſtine will be as one of them;—for the Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will alſo deliver me out of his hand.

The concluſion was natural; and the experience which every man has had of GOD's former loving kindneſs and protection to him, either in dangers or diſtreſs, does unavoidably engage him to think in the ſame train. It is obſervable, that the apoſtle St Paul, encouraging the Corinthians to bear with patience the trials incident to human nature, reminds them of the deliverances that GOD did formerly vouchſafe to him, and his fellow-labourers, Gaius and Ariſtarchus; and on that ground builds a rock of encouragement, for future truſt and dependence on him. His life had been in very great jeopardy at Epheſus, where he had like to have been brought out to the theatre, to be devoured by wild

beasts, and, indeed, had no human means to avert, and consequently to escape it; and therefore, he tells them, that he had this advantage by it, that the more he believed he should be put to death, the more he was engaged, by his deliverance, never to depend on any worldly trust, but only on GOD, who can rescue from the greatest extremity, even from the grave, and death itself. For we would not, brethren, says he, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia,—that we were pressed out of measure, above our strength, insomuch, that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in GOD, who raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, and in whom we trust that he will still deliver us.

And, indeed, a stronger argument cannot be brought for future trust, than the remembrance of past protection; for, what ground or reason can I have to distrust the kindness of that person, who has always been my friend and benefactor?

On whom can I better rely for assistance in the day of my distress, than on him who stood by me in all mine affliction, and, when I was at the brink of destruction, delivered me out of all my troubles?—Would it not be highly ungrateful, and reflect either upon his goodness or his sufficiency, to distrust that

providence, which has always had a watchful eye over me; and who, according to his gracious promiſes, will never leave me, nor forſake me; and who, in all my wants, in all my emergencies, has been abundantly more willing to give, than I to aſk it?—If the former and the latter rain have hitherto deſcended upon the earth in due ſeaſon, and ſeed-time and harveſt have never yet failed;—why ſhould I fear famine in the land, or doubt but that he who feedeth the raven, and providently catereth for the ſparrow, ſhould likewiſe be my comfort? How unlikely is it that ever he ſhould ſuffer his truth to fail?—This train of reflection, from the conſideration of paſt mercies, is ſuitable and natural to all maakind; there being no one, who, by calling to mind GOD's kindneſſes, which have been ever of old, but will ſee cauſe to apply the argument to himſelf.

And though, in looking back upon the events which have befallen us, we are apt to attribute too much to the arm of fleſh, in recounting the more ſucceſsful parts of them,—ſaying, My wiſdom, my parts, and addreſs, extricated me from this misfortune;—my foreſight and penetration ſaved me from a ſecond;—my courage, and the mightineſs of my ſtrength, carried me through a third:—however we are accuſtomed to talk in this manner, yet, whoever coolly ſits down, and reflects upon the many accidents (though very im-

properly called ſo) which have befallen him in the courſe of his life;—when he conſiders the many amazing turns in his favour,—ſometimes in the moſt unpromiſing caſes,—and often brought about by the moſt unlikely cauſes;—when he remembers the particular providences which have gone along with him,—the many perſonal deliverances which have preſerved him,—the unaccountable manner in which he has been enabled to get through difficulties, which on all ſides beſet him, at one time of his life,—or the ſtrength of mind he found himſelf endowed with, to encounter afflictions, which fell upon him at another period:—where is the man, I ſay, who looks back, with the leaſt religious ſenſe, upon what has thus happened to him, who could not give you ſufficient proofs of GOD's power, and his arm over him, and recount ſeveral caſes, wherein the GOD of Jacob was his help, and the Holy One of Iſrael his redeemer?

Haſt thou ever laid upon the bed of languiſhing, or laboured under a grievous diſtemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy ſorrowful and penſive ſpirit at that time; and add to it, who it was that had mercy on thee, that brought thee out of darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, and made all thy bed in thy ſickneſs.

Hath the ſcantineſs of thy condition hurried thee into great ſtraits and difficulties, and brought thee almoſt to diſtraction? Conſider

who it was that ſpread thy table in that wilderneſs of thought,—who it was that made thy cup to overflow,—who added a friend of conſolation to thee, and thereby ſpake peace to thy troubled mind. Haſt thou ever ſuſtained any conſiderable damage in thy ſtock or trade? Bethink thyſelf who it was that gave thee a ſerene and contented mind under thoſe loſſes. If thou haſt recovered, conſider who it was that repaired thoſe breaches, when thy own ſkill and endeavours failed: call to mind whoſe providence has bleſſed them ſince,—whoſe hand it was that has ſince ſet a hedge about thee, and made all that thou haſt done to proſper. Haſt thou ever been wounded in thy more tender part, through the loſs of an obliging huſband? or haſt thou been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child, by his unexpected death?—

O conſider, whether the GOD of truth did not approve himſelf a father to thee, when fatherleſs, or a huſband to thee, when a widow; and has either given thee a name better than that of ſons and daughters, or, even beyond thy hope—made thy remaining tender branches to grow up, tall and beautiful, like the cedars of Libanus.

Strengthened by theſe conſiderations, ſuggeſting the ſame, or like paſt deliverances, either to thyſelf, thy friends or acquaintance, —thou wilt learn this great leſſon in the text, in all thy exigencies and diſtreſſes—to truſt in

GOD; and, whatever befals thee, in the many changes and chances of this mortal life, to ſpeak comfort to thy ſoul, and to ſay, in the words of Habakkuk the prophet, with which I conclude—

Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; although the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; although the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet we will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the GOD of our ſalvation.

To whom be all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXV.

EXODUS xxi. 14.

But if a man come preſumptuouſly upon his neighbour, to ſlay him with guile;—thou ſhalt take him from my altar, that he may die.

AS the end and happy reſult of ſociety, was, our mutual protection from the depredations which malice and avarice lay us open to,—ſo have the laws of God laid proportionable reſtraints againſt ſuch violations as would defeat us of ſuch a ſecurity. Of all other attacks which can be made againſt us,—that of a man's life—which is his all—being the greateſt,—the offence, in God's diſpenſation to the Jews, was denounced as the moſt heinous,—and repreſented as moſt unpardonable. At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.—Whoſo ſheddeth man's blood, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed.—Ye ſhall take no ſatisfaction for the life of a murderer;—he ſhall ſurely be put to death.—So ye ſhall not pollute the land wherein ye are,—for blood defileth the land;—and the land cannot be cleanſed of blood that is ſhed therein, but by the blood

of him that ſhed it.—For this reaſon, by the laws of all civilized nations, in all parts of the globe, it has been puniſhed with death.

Some civilized and wiſe communities have ſo far incorporated theſe ſevere diſpenſations into their municipal laws, as to allow of no diſtinction betwixt murder and homicide,—at leaſt in the penalty;—leaving the intentions of the ſeveral parties concerned in it, to that Being who knows the heart, and will adjuſt the differences of the caſe hereafter. This falls, no doubt, heavy upon particulars;—but it is urged for the benefit of the whole. It is not the buſineſs of a preacher to enter into an examination of the grounds and reaſons for ſo ſeeming a ſeverity.—Where moſt ſevere,—they have proceeded, no doubt, from an exceſs of abhorrence of a crime—which is, of all others, moſt terrible and ſhocking in its own nature—and the moſt direct attack and ſtroke at ſociety,—as the ſecurity of a man's life was the firſt protection of ſociety—the ground-work of all the other bleſſings to be deſired from ſuch a compact. Thefts,—oppreſſions,—exactions, and violences of that kind, cut off the branches;—this ſmote the root;—all periſhed with it;—the injury irreparable.—No after-act could make amends for it. What recompence can he give to a man in exchange for his life?—What ſatisfaction to the widow,—the fatherleſs,—to the family,—the friends,—the relations cut off from his

protection, and rendered, perhaps, deſtitute, —perhaps miſerable for ever!

No wonder, that, by the law of nature, this crime was always purſued with the moſt extreme vengeance; which made the Barbarians to judge, when they ſaw St Paul upon the point of dying a ſudden and terrifying death—No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has eſcaped the ſea, yet vengeance ſuffereth not to live.

The cenſure, there, was raſh and uncharitable; but the honeſt deteſtation of the crime was uppermoſt. They ſaw a dreadful puniſhment—they thought; and in ſeeing the one, —they ſuſpected the other. And the vengeance which had overtaken the holy man, was meant by them the vengeance and puniſhment of the Almighty Being, whoſe providence and honour was concerned in purſuing him, from the place he had fled from, to that iſland.

The honour and authority of GOD is moſt evidently ſtruck at, moſt certainly, in every ſuch crime,—and therefore he would purſue it;—it being the reaſon, in the ninth of Geneſis, upon which the prohibition of murder is grounded;—for in the image of GOD created he man;—as if to attempt the life of a man had ſomething in it peculiarly daring and audacious; not only ſhocking, as to its conſequence, above all other crimes,—but of perſonal violence and indignity againſt GOD, the

author of our life and death. That it is the higheſt act of injuſtice to man, and which will admit of no compenſation,—I have ſaid.—But the depriving a man of life, does not comprehend the whole of his ſuffering;—he may be cut off in an unprovided or diſordered condition, with regard to the great account betwixt himſelf and his Maker. He may be under the power of irregular paſſions and deſires. The beſt of men are not always upon their guard.—And I am ſure we have all reaſon to join in that affecting part of our Litany,—That, amongſt other evils,—GOD would deliver us from ſudden death;—that we may have ſome foreſight of that period, to compoſe our ſpirits,—prepare our accounts,—and put ourſelves in the beſt poſture we can to meet it; for, after we are moſt prepared,—it is a terror to human nature.

The people of ſome nations are ſaid to have a peculiar art in poiſoning by ſlow and gradual advances. In this caſe,—however horrid,—it favours of mercy with regard to our ſpiritual ſtate;—for, the ſenſible decays of nature, which a ſufferer muſt feel within him, from the ſecret workings of the horrid drug, give warning, and ſhow that mercy, which the bloody hand that comes upon his neighbour ſuddenly, and ſlays him with guile—has denied him. It may ſerve to admoniſh him of the duty of repentance, and to make his peace with GOD, whilſt he had time and

opportunity. The ſpeedy execution of juſtice, which, as our laws now ſtand, and which were intended for that end, muſt ſtrike the greater terror upon that account. Short as the interval between ſentence and death is, it is long, compared to the caſe of the murdered.—Thou allowedſt the man no time,—ſaid the judge to a late criminal, in a moſt affecting manner,—thou allowedſt him not a moment to prepare for eternity :—and, to one who thinks at all, it is, of all reflections and ſelf-accuſations, the moſt heavy and unſurmountable—That, by the hand of violence, a man in a perfect ſtate of health, whilſt he walks out in perfect ſecurity, as he thinks, with his friends—perhaps whilſt he is ſleeping ſoundly—to be hurried out of the world by the aſſaſſin,—by a ſudden ſtroke—to find himſelf at the bar of GOD's juſtice, without notice and preparation for trial,—it is moſt horrible!

Though he be really a good man, (and it is to be hoped GOD makes merciful allowances in ſuch caſes),—yet, it is a terrifying conſideration at the beſt ;—and, as the injury is greater,—there are alſo very aggravating circumſtances relating to the perſon who commits this act :—As, when it is the effect, not of a raſh and ſudden paſſion, which ſometimes diſorders and confounds reaſon for a moment,—but of a deliberate and propenſe deſign or malice ;—when the ſun not only

goes down, but riſes upon his wrath;—when he ſleeps not—till he has ſtruck the ſtroke;—when, after he has had time and leiſure to recollect himſelf,—and conſider what he is going to do;—when, after all the checks of conſcience,—the ſtruggles of humanity,—the recoilings of his own blood, at the thoughts of ſhedding another man's,—he ſhall perſiſt ſtill, and reſolve to do it—Merciful GOD! protect us—from doing or ſuffering ſuch evils. Bleſſed be thy name and providence, which ſeldom or ever ſuffers it to eſcape with impunity.—In vain does the guilty flatter himſelf with hopes of ſecrecy or impunity:—the eye of GOD is always upon him.—Whither can he fly from his preſence?—By the immenſity of his nature, he is preſent in all places;—by the infinity of it, to all times;—by his omniſcience, to all thoughts, words, and actions of men. By an emphatical phraſe in Scripture, the blood of the innocent is ſaid to cry to Heaven from the ground for vengeance;—and it was for this reaſon, that he might be brought to juſtice—that he was debarred the benefit of any aſylum, and the cities of refuge.—For the elders of his city ſhall ſend and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood,—and their eye ſhould not pity him.

The text ſays,—Thou ſhalt take him from my altar, that he may die. It had been a very ancient imagination, that, for men guilty

of this, and other horrid crimes,—a place held ſacred, as dedicated to GOD, was a refuge and protection to them from the hands of juſtice. The law of GOD cuts the tranſgreſſor off from all deluſive hopes of this kind;—and I think the Romiſh church has very little to boaſt of, in the ſanctuaries which ſhe leaves open for this, and other crimes and irregularities;—ſanctuaries, which are often the firſt temptations to wickedneſs, and therefore, bring the greater ſcandal and diſhonour to her that authoriſes their pretenſions.

Every obſtruction of the courſe of juſtice—is a door opened to betray ſociety, and bereave us of thoſe bleſſings which it has in view. To ſtand up for the privileges of ſuch places, is to invite men to ſin, with a bribe of impunity. It is a ſtrange way of doing honour to GOD, to ſcreen actions which are a diſgrace to humanity.

What Scripture, and all civilized nations, teach concerning the crime of taking away another man's life,—is applicable to the wickedneſs of a man's attempting to bereave himſelf of his own. He has no more right over it,—than over that of others:—and, whatever falſe gloſſes have been put upon it by men of bad heads or bad hearts,—it is at the bottom a complication of cowardice, and wickedneſs, and weakneſs;—is one of the fataleſt miſtakes, deſperation can hurry a man into;—inconſiſtent with all the reaſoning and

religion of the world, and irreconcileable with that patience under afflictions,—that reſignation and ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD in all ſtraits, which is required of us. But, if our calamities are brought upon ourſelves by a man's own wickedneſs,—ſtill has he leſs to urge,—leaſt reaſon has he to renounce the protection of GOD—when he moſt ſtands in need of it, and of his mercy.

But, as I intend the ſubject of ſelf-murder for my diſcourſe next Sunday,—I ſhall not anticipate what I have to ſay, but proceed to conſider ſome other caſes, in which the law relating to the life of our neighbour is tranſgreſſed in different degrees; all which are generally ſpoken of under the ſubject of murder,—and conſidered by the beſt caſuiſts as a ſpecies of the ſame,—and, in juſtice to the ſubject, cannot be paſſed here.—

St JOHN ſays, Whoſoever hateth his brother, is a murderer;—it is the firſt ſtep to this ſin:—and our Saviour, in his ſermon upon the Mount, has explained in how many ſlighter and unſuſpected ways and degrees,—the command in the law,—Thou ſhalt do no murder, may be oppoſed, if not broken. All real miſchiefs and injuries maliciouſly brought upon a man, to the ſorrow and diſturbance of his mind,—eating out the comfort of his life, and ſhortening his days,—are this ſin in diſguiſe;—and the ground of the Scripture's expreſſing it with ſuch ſeverity, is,—that the

beginnings of wrath and malice—in event, often extend to ſuch great and unforeſeen effects, as, were we foretold them, we ſhould give ſo little credit to, as to ſay,—Is thy ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do this thing?—And, though theſe beginnings do not neceſſarily produce the worſt, (GOD forbid they ſhould), yet, they cannot be committed without theſe evil ſeeds are firſt ſown;—as Cain's cauſeleſs anger (as Dr Clarke obſerves) againſt his brother—to which the Apoſtle alludes—ended in taking away his life;—and the beſt inſtructors teach us, that, to avoid a ſin,—we muſt avoid the ſteps and temptations which lead to it.

This ſhould warn us to free our minds from all tincture of avarice and deſire after what is another man's. It operates the ſame way,—and has terminated too oft in the ſame crime. And it is the great excellency of the Chriſtian religion,—that it has an eye to this, in the ſtreſs laid upon the firſt ſprings of evils in the heart;—rendering us accountable, not only for our words,—but the thoughts themſelves,—if not checked in time, but ſuffered to proceed farther than the firſt motions of concupiſcence.

Ye have heard, therefore, ſays our SAVIOUR, that it was ſaid by them of old time,—Thou ſhalt not kill;—but I ſay unto you,—Whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment;—

and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, —ſhall be in danger of the council;—but whoſoever ſhall ſay, "Thou fool,"—ſhall be in danger of hell-fire. The interpretation of which I ſhall give you in the words of a great ſcripturiſt, Dr Clarke,—and is as follows: That the three gradations of crimes are an alluſion to the three different degrees of puniſhment, in the three courts of judicature amongſt the Jews. And our SAVIOUR's meaning was,—That every degree of ſin, from its firſt conception to its outrage,—every degree of malice and hatred,—ſhall receive from GOD a puniſhment proportionable to the offence. Whereas, the old law, according to the Jewiſh interpretation, extended not to theſe things at all,—forbade only murder and outward injuries. Whoſoever ſhall ſay, "Thou fool," ſhall be in danger of hell-fire.—The ſenſe of which is not, that, in the ſtrict and literal acceptation, every raſh and paſſionate expreſſion ſhall be puniſhed with eternal damnation; —(for who then would be ſaved?)—but that at the exact account in the judgment of the great day, every ſecret thought and intent of the heart ſhall have its juſt eſtimation and weight, in the degrees of puniſhment which ſhall be aſſigned to every one in his final ſtate.

There is another ſpecies of this crime, which is ſeldom taken notice of in diſcourſes upon the ſubject, and yet can be reduced to no other claſs:—And that is, where the life

of our neighbour is ſhortened,—and often taken away, as directly as by a weapon, by the empirical ſale of noſtrums and quack medicines,—which ignorance and avarice blend. —The loud tongue of ignorance impudently promiſes much,—and the ear of the ſick is open.—And as many of theſe pretenders deal in edge-tools,—too many, I fear, periſh with the miſapplication of them.

So great are the difficulties of tracing out the hidden cauſes of the evils to which this frame of ours is ſubject,—that the moſt candid of the profeſſion have ever allowed and lamented how unavoidably they are in the dark. So that the beſt medicines, adminiſtered with the wiſeſt heads,—ſhall often do the miſchief they were intended to prevent.—Theſe are misfortunes to which we are ſubject in this ſtate of darkneſs;—but when men, without ſkill,—without education,—without knowledge either of the diſtemper, or even of what they ſell,—make merchandiſe of the miſerable,—and, from a diſhoneſt principle—trifle with the pains of the unfortunate—too often with their lives,—and from the mere motive of a diſhoneſt gain;—every ſuch inſtance, of a perſon bereft of life by the hand of ignorance, can be conſidered in no other light than a branch of the ſame root. —It is murder in the true ſenſe; which, though not cognizable by our laws,—by the laws of right, every man's own mind and

conſcience,—muſt appear equally black and deteſtable.—

In doing what is wrong,—we ſtand chargeable with all the bad conſequences which ariſe from the action, whether foreſeen or not. And as the principal view of the empiric, in thoſe caſes, is not what he always pretends—the good of the public,—but the good of himſelf,—it makes the action what it is.—

Under this head, it may not be improper to comprehend all adulterations of medicines, wilfully made worſe through avarice. If a life is loſt by ſuch wilful adulterations,—and, it may be affirmed, that in many critical turns of an acute diſtemper, there is but a ſingle caſt left for the patient—the trial and chance of a ſingle drug in his behalf;—if that has wilfully been adulterated, and wilfully deſpoiled of its beſt virtues,—what will the vender anſwer?—

May GOD grant we may all anſwer well for ourſelves, that we may be finally happy. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVI.

SANCTITY OF THE APOSTLES.

MATT. xi. 6.—*Bleſſed is he that ſhall not be offended in me.*

THE general prejudices of the Jewiſh nation concerning the royal ſtate and condition of the SAVIOUR who was to come into the world,—was a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence to the greateſt part of that unhappy and prepoſſeſſed people, when the promiſe was actually fulfilled.—Whether it was altogether the traditions of their fathers,—or that the rapturous expreſſions of the prophets, which repreſented the MESSIAH's ſpiritual kingdom in ſuch extent of power and dominion, miſled them into it,—or, that their own carnal expectations turned wilful interpreters upon them, inclining them to look for nothing but the wealth and worldly grandeur which were to be acquired under their deliverer;—whether theſe,—or that the ſyſtem of temporal bleſſings helped to cheriſh them in this groſs and covetous expectation,—it was one of the great cauſes for their rejecting him.—"This fellow, we know not "whence he is,"—was the popular cry of

one part;—and they, who ſeemed to know whence he was, ſcornfully turned it againſt him, by the repeated query,—Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary, the brother of James and Joſes, and of Juda and Simeon?—and are not his ſiſters here with us?—And they were offended at him.—So that, though he was prepared by GOD to be the glory of his people Iſrael, yet the circumſtances of humility, in which he was manifeſted, were thought a ſcandal to them.—Strange!—that he who was born their king,—ſhould be born of no other virgin than Mary,—the meaneſt of their people,—for he hath regarded the low eſtate of his handmaiden;—and one of the pooreſt too,—for ſhe had not a lamb to offer,—but was purified, as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle-dove:—that the SAVIOUR of their nation, whom they expected to be uſhered amidſt them with all the enſigns and apparatus of royalty, ſhould be brought forth in a ſtable, and anſwerable to diſtreſs;—ſubjected all his life to the loweſt conditions of humanity:—that whilſt he lived, he ſhould not have a hole to put his head in, nor his corpſe in when he died,—but his grave, too, muſt be the gift of charity:—Theſe were thwarting conſiderations to thoſe who waited for the redemption of Iſrael, and looked for it in no other ſhape, than the accompliſhment of thoſe golden dreams of temporal power and ſovereignty, which had filled

their imaginations. The ideas were not to be reconciled; and ſo inſuperable an obſtacle was the prejudice on one ſide, to their belief on the other,—that it literally fell out, as Simeon prophetically declared of the MESSIAH,—that he was ſet forth for the fall, as well as the riſing again, of many in Iſrael.

This, though it was the cauſe of their infidelity, was however no excuſe for it. For, whatever their miſtakes were, the miracles which were wrought in contradiction to them, brought conviction enough, to leave them without excuſe;—and beſides, it was natural for them to have concluded, had their prepoſſeſſions given them leave,—that he, who fed five thouſand with five loaves and two fiſhes, could not want power to be great;—and therefore needed not to appear in the condition of poverty and meanneſs, had it not, on other ſcores, been more needful to confront the pride and vanity of the world,—and to ſhew his followers what the temper of Chriſtianity was, by the temper of its firſt inſtitutor;—who, though they were offered, and he could have commanded them,—deſpiſed the glories of the world,—took upon him the form of a ſervant,—and, though equal with GOD,—yet made himſelf of no reputation,—that he might ſettle, and be the example of, ſo holy and humble a religion, and thereby convince his diſciples for ever, that neither his kingdom, nor their happineſs, were to be

of this world. Thus the Jews might have eaſily argued;—but when there was nothing but reaſon to do it with on one ſide, and ſtrong prejudices, backed with intereſt, to maintain the diſpute upon the other—we do not find the point is always ſo eaſily determined. Although the purity of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, and the mighty works he wrought in its ſupport, were demonſtratively ſtronger arguments for his divinity, than the unreſpected lowlineſs of his condition could be againſt it;—yet the prejudice continued ſtrong:—they had been accuſtomed to temporal promiſes;—ſo bribed to do their duty,—they could not endure to think of a religion that would not promiſe as much as Moſes did, to fill their baſket, and ſet them high above all nations:—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre;—and whoſe principles and promiſes, like the curſes of their law,—called for ſufferings, and promiſed perſecutions.

If we take this key along with us through the New Teſtament, it will let us into the ſpirit and meaning of many of our SAVIOUR's replies in his conferences with his diſciples, and others of the Jews;—ſo particularly in this place, Matt. xi. when John had ſent two of his diſciples to inquire, Whether it was he that ſhould come, or that they were to look for another?—Our SAVIOUR, with a particular eye to this prejudice, and the gene-

ral ſcandal he knew had riſen againſt his religion, upon this worldly account,—after a recital to the meſſengers of the many miracles he had wrought; as that—the blind received their ſight,—the lame walked,—the lepers were cleanſed,—the dead raiſed;—all which characters, with their benevolent ends, fully demonſtrated him to be the MESSIAH that was promiſed them; he cloſes up his anſwer to them with the words of the text—And bleſſed is he that ſhall not be offended in me;—bleſſed is the man whoſe upright and honeſt heart will not be blinded by worldly conſiderations, or hearken to his luſts and prepoſſeſſions in a truth of this moment. The like benediction is recorded in the 7th chapter of St Luke. And in the 6th of St John—when Peter broke out in that warm confeſſion of their belief—LORD, we believe,—we are ſure that thou art CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD;—the ſame benediction is uttered,—though couched in different words,—Bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona,—for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it, but my Father which is in heaven. Fleſh and blood,—the natural workings of this carnal deſire,—the luſt and love of the world, have had no hand in this conviction of thine; but my Father, and the works which I have wrought in his name—in vindication of this faith,—have eſtabliſhed thee in it, againſt which the gates of hell ſhall not prevail.—

This univerſal ruling principle, and almoſt invincible attachment to the intereſts and glories of the world, which we ſee firſt made ſo powerful a ſtand againſt the belief of Chriſtianity,—has continued to have as ill an effect, at leaſt, upon the practice of it ever ſince;—and therefore, there is no one point of wiſdom that is of nearer importance to us,—than to purify this groſs appetite, and reſtrain it within bounds, by lowering our high conceit of the things of this life, and our concern for thoſe advantages which miſled the Jews.—To judge juſtly of the world—we muſt ſtand at a due diſtance from it;—which will diſcover to us the vanity of its riches and honours, in ſuch true dimenſions, as will engage us to behave ourſelves towards them with moderation. This is all that is wanting to make us wiſe and good,—that we may be left to the full influence of religion;—to which Chriſtianity ſo far conduces, that it is the great bleſſing, the peculiar advantage we enjoy under its inſtitution,—that it affords us not only the moſt excellent precepts of this kind, but alſo, it ſhows us thoſe precepts confirmed by moſt excellent examples.—A heathen philoſopher may talk very elegantly about deſpiſing the world, and, like Seneca, may preſcribe very ingenious rules, to teach us an art he never exerciſed himſelf:—for, all the while he was writing in praiſe of poverty, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and endeavour-

ing to make it greater. But, if ever we hope to reduce thoſe rules to practice, it muſt be by the help of religion.—If we would find men, who, by their lives, bore witneſs to their doctrines, we muſt look for them amongſt the acts and monuments of our church,—amongſt the firſt followers of their crucified Maſter; who ſpoke with authority, becauſe they ſpoke experimentally, and took care to make their words good,—by deſpiſing the world, and voluntarily accounting all things in it loſs. that they might win CHRIST.—O holy and bleſſed apoſtles!—bleſſed were ye indeed,—for ye conferred not with fleſh and blood,—for ye were not offended in him through any conſiderations of this world;—ye conferred not with fleſh and blood, neither with its ſnares and temptations.—Neither the pleaſures of life, or the pains of death, laid hold upon your faith, to make you fall from him.—Ye had your prejudices of worldly grandeur, in common with the reſt of your nation:—ſaw, like them, your expectations blaſted;—but ye gave them up, as men governed by reaſon and truth.—As ye ſurrendered all your hopes in this world to your faith, with fortitude,—ſo did ye meet the terrors of the world with the ſame temper.—Neither the frowns and diſcountenance of the civil powers,—neither tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution,—or cold,—or nakedneſs,—or famine,—or the ſword, could ſeparate you from

the love of CHRIST.—Ye took up your croſſes cheerfully, and followed him;—followed the ſame rugged way—trod the wine-preſs after him;—voluntarily ſubmitting yourſelves to poverty,—to puniſhment,—to the ſcorn and the reproaches of the world, which ye knew were to be the portion of all of you who engaged in preaching a myſtery, ſo ſpoken againſt by the world,—ſo unpalatable to all its paſſions and pleaſures,—and ſo irreconcileable to the pride of human reaſon. So that ye were, as one of ye expreſſed, and all of ye experimentally found, though ye were made as the filth of the world, and the off-ſcouring of all things, upon this account;—yet ye went on as zealouſly as ye ſet out.—Ye were not offended, nor aſhamed of the goſpel of CHRIST:—wherefore ſhould ye?—The impoſtor and hypocrite might have been aſhamed;—the guilty would have found cauſe for it:—ye had no cauſe,—though ye had temptation.—Ye preached *but what ye knew*, and your honeſt and upright hearts gave evidence—the ſtrongeſt—to the truth of it;—for ye left all,—ye ſuffered all,—ye gave all that your ſincerity had left you to give.—Ye gave your lives at laſt as pledges and confirmations of your faith and warmeſt affection for your LORD.—Holy and bleſſed men!—ye gave all, when, alas! our cold and frozen affection will part with nothing for his ſake, not even with our vices and follies, which are

worſe than nothing;—for they are vanity, and miſery, and death.—

The ſtate of Chriſtianity calls not now for ſuch evidences as the apoſtles gave of their attachment to it.—We have, literally ſpeaking, neither houſes, nor lands, nor poſſeſſions to forſake;—we have neither wives or children, or brethren or ſiſters, to be torn from;—no rational pleaſure—or natural endearments to give up. We have nothing to part with,—but what is not our intereſt to keep,—our luſts and paſſions. We have nothing to do for CHRIST's ſake—but what is moſt for our own;—that is,—to be temperate, and chaſte, and juſt,—and peaceable,—and charitable,—and kind to one another.—So that, if man could ſuppoſe himſelf in a capacity even of capitulating with GOD, concerning the terms upon which he would ſubmit to his government,—and to chooſe the laws he would be bound to obſerve in teſtimony of his faith;—it were impoſſible for him to make any propoſals, which, upon all accounts ſhould be more advantageous to his intereſt,—than thoſe very conditions to which we are already obliged; that is, to deny ourſelves ungodlineſs, to live ſoberly and righteouſly in this preſent life, and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites, as are for the honour of human nature,—the improvement of our happineſs,—our health,—our peace,—our reputation and ſafety. When one conſiders this repreſenta-

tion of the temporal inducements of Chriſtianity,—and compares it with the difficulties and diſcouragements which they encountered who firſt made profeſſion of a perſecuted and hated religion;—at the ſame time that it raiſes the idea of the fortitude and ſanctity of thoſe holy men, of whom the world was not worthy,—it ſadly diminiſhes that of ourſelves—which, though it has all the bleſſings of this life apparently on its ſide to ſupport it, yet can ſcarce be kept alive: And if we may form a judgment from the little ſtock of religion which is left,—ſhould GOD ever exact the ſame trials, unleſs we greatly alter for the better, or there ſhould prove ſome ſecret charm in perſecution, which we know not of;—it is much to be doubted, if the Son of man ſhould make this proof—of this generation,—whether there would be found faith upon the earth.

As this argument may convince us, ſo let it ſhame us into virtue, that the admirable examples of thoſe holy men may not be left us, or commemorated by us to no end;—but rather that they may anſwer the pious purpoſe of their inſtitution,—to conform our lives to theirs,—that with them we may be partakers of a glorious inheritance, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVII.

PENANCES.

1 JOHN v. 3.—*And his commandments are not grievous.*

NO,—they are not grievous, my dear auditors.—Amongſt the many prejudices which, at one time or other, have been conceived againſt our holy religion, there is ſcarce any one which has done more diſhonour to Chriſtianity, or which has been more oppoſite to the ſpirit of the goſpel, than this, in expreſs contradiction to the words of the text, "That the commandments of God "*are* grievous;"—that the way which leads to life is not only ſtrait—for that, our Saviour tells us,—and that with much tribulation we ſhall ſeek it;—but that Chriſtians are bound to make the worſt of it, and tread it barefoot upon thorns and briers, if ever they expect to arrive happily at their journey's end;—and, in courſe—during this diſaſtrous pilgrimage, it is our duty ſo to renounce the world, and abſtract ourſelves from it, as neither to interfere with its intereſts, or taſte any of the pleaſures, or any of the enjoyments of this life.—

Nor has this been confined merely to ſpeculation, but has frequently been extended to practice, as is plain, not only from the lives of many legendary ſaints and hermits,—whoſe chief commendation ſeems to have been, "That they fled unnaturally from all commerce with their fellow-creatures, and then mortified, and piouſly—half-ſtarved themſelves to death;"—but likewiſe from the many auſtere and fantaſtic orders which we ſee in the Romiſh church, which have all owed their origin and eſtabliſhment to the ſame idle and extravagant opinion.

Nor is it to be doubted, but the affectation of ſomething like it in our Methodiſts, when they deſcant upon the neceſſity of alienating themſelves from the world, and ſelling all that they have,—is not to be aſcribed to the ſame miſtaken enthuſiaſtic principle, which would caſt ſo black a ſhade upon religion, as if the kind Author of it had created us on purpoſe to go mourning, all our lives long, in ſackcloth and aſhes, and ſent us into the world as ſo many ſaints-errant, in queſt of adventures full of ſorrow and affliction.

Strange force of enthuſiaſm!—and yet not altogether unaccountable. For, what opinion was there ever ſo odd, or action ſo extravagant, which has not, at one time or other, been produced by ignorance,—conceit,—melancholy;—a mixture of devotion, with an ill concurrence of air and diet, operating to-

gether in the same person?—When the minds of men happen to be thus unfortunately prepared, whatever groundless doctrine rises up, and settles itself strongly upon their fancies, has generally the ill luck to be interpreted as an illumination from the Spirit of GOD; and whatever strange action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do,—that impulse is concluded to be a call from heaven; and consequently, that they cannot err in executing it.

If this, or some such account, was not to be admitted, how is it possible to be conceived, that Christianity, which breathed out nothing but peace and comfort to mankind, which professedly took off the severities of the Jewish law, and was given us in the spirit of meekness, to ease our shoulders of a burden which was too heavy for us;—that this religion, so kindly calculated for the ease and tranquillity of man, which enjoins nothing but what is suitable to his nature, should be so misunderstood;—or that it should ever be supposed, that he who is infinitely happy, could envy us our enjoyments;—or that a Being infinitely kind, would grudge a mournful passenger a little rest and refreshment, to support his spirits through a weary pilgrimage;—or that he should call him to an account hereafter, because, in his way, he had hastily snatched at some fugacious and innocent pleasures, till he was suffered to take up

his final repoſe. This is no improbable account; and the many invitations we find in Scripture, to a grateful enjoyment of the bleſſings and advantages of life, make it evident. The apoſtle tells us in the text—That GOD's commandments are not grievous. He has pleaſure in the proſperity of his people, and wills not that they ſhould turn tyrants and executioners upon their minds or bodies, and inflict pains and penalties on them, to no end or purpoſe:—That he has propoſed peace and plenty, joy and victory, as the encouragement and portion of his ſervants; thereby inſtructing us,—that our virtue is not neceſſarily endangered by the fruition of outward things; but that temporal bleſſings and advantages, inſtead of extinguiſhing, more naturally kindle our love and gratitude to GOD, before whom it is no way inconſiſtent both to worſhip and rejoice.

If this was not ſo, why, you will ſay, does GOD ſeem to have made ſuch proviſion for our happineſs? Why has he given us ſo many powers and faculties for enjoyment, and adapted ſo many objects to gratify and entertain them? Some of which he has created ſo fair,—with ſuch wonderful beauty, and has formed them ſo exquiſitely for this end,—that they have power, for a time, to charm away the ſenſe of pain,—to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and ſickneſs, and make it go and remember its miſeries no

more. Can all this, you will say, be reconciled to GOD's wisdom, which does nothing in vain?—or can it be accounted for on any other supposition, but that the Author of our being, who has given us all things richly to enjoy, wills us a comfortable existence even *here*, and seems, moreover, so evidently to have ordered things with a view to this, that the ways which lead to our future happiness, when rightly understood, he has made to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace?

From this representation of things, we are led to this demonstrative truth, then—That GOD never intended to debar man of pleasures, under certain limitations.

Travellers, on a business of the last and most important concern, may be allowed to please their eyes with the natural and artificial beauties of the country they are passing through, without reproach of forgetting the main errand they were sent upon; and if they are not led out of their road by variety of prospects, edifices and ruins, would it not be a senseless piece of severity to shut their eyes against such gratifications? *For who has required such service at their hands?*

The humouring of certain appetites, where morality is not concerned, seems to be the means by which the Author of nature intended to sweeten this journey of life, and bear us up under the many shocks and hard buffetings, which we are sure to meet with in

our way. And a man might, with as much reaſon, muffle up himſelf againſt ſunſhine and fair weather, and at other times expoſe himſelf naked to the inclemencies of cold and rain, as debar himſelf of the innocent delights of his nature, for affected reſerve and melancholy.

It is true, on the other hand, our paſſions are ſo apt to grow upon us by indulgence, and become exorbitant, if they are not kept under exact diſcipline, that by way of caution and prevention, it were better, at certain times, to affect ſome degree of needleſs reſerve, than hazard any ill conſequences from the other extreme.

But when almoſt the whole of religion is made to conſiſt in the pious fooleries of penances and ſufferings, as is practiſed in the church of Rome (did no other evil attend it)—yet, ſince it is putting religion upon a wrong ſcent, placing it more in theſe, than in inward purity and integrity of heart, one cannot guard too much againſt this, as well as all other ſuch abuſes of religion, as make it to conſiſt in ſomething which it ought not. How ſuch mockery became a part of religion at firſt, or upon what motives they were imagined to be ſervices acceptable to GOD, is hard to give a better account of, than what was hinted above,—namely—that men of melancholy and moroſe tempers, conceiving the Deity to be, like themſelves, a gloomy

diſcontented, and ſorrowful Being,—believed he delighted, as they did, in ſplenetic and mortifying actions, and therefore, made their religious worſhip to conſiſt of chimeras, as wild and barbarous as their own dreams and vapours.

What ignorance and enthuſiaſm at firſt introduced,—now tyranny and impoſture continue to ſupport. So that the political improvement of theſe deluſions, to the purpoſes of wealth and power, is made one of the ſtrongeſt pillars which upholds the Romiſh religion;—which, with all its pretences to a more ſtrict mortification and ſanctity,—when you examine it minutely, is little elſe than a mere pecuniary contrivance. And the trueſt definition you can give of popery, is—that it is a ſyſtem put together and contrived to operate upon mens weakneſſes and paſſions,—and thereby to pick their pockets,—and leave them in a fit condition for its arbitrary deſigns.

And indeed that church has not been wanting in gratitude for the good offices of this kind, which the doctrine of penances has done them; for, in conſideration of its ſervices,—they have raiſed it above the level of moral duties,—and have at length complimented it into the number of their ſacraments, and made it a neceſſary point of ſalvation.

By theſe, and other tenets, no leſs politic and inquiſitional,—popery has found out the art of making men miſerable in ſpite of their ſenſes, and the plenty with which GOD has bleſſed them.

So that in many countries where popery reigns,—but eſpecially in that part of Italy where ſhe has raiſed her throne,—though, by the happineſs of its ſoil and climate, it is capable of producing as great variety and abundance as any country upon earth;—yet ſo ſucceſsful have its ſpiritual directors been in the management and retail of theſe bleſſings, that they have found means to allay, if not entirely to defeat them all, by one pretence or other. Some bitterneſs is officiouſly ſqueezed into every man's cup, for his ſoul's health, till, at length, the whole intention of nature and providence is deſtroyed. It is not ſurprizing, that where ſuch unnatural ſeverities are practiſed and heightened by other hardſhips,—the moſt fruitful land ſhould be barren, and wear a face of poverty and deſolation;—or that many thouſands, as has been obſerved, ſhould fly from the rigours of ſuch a government, and ſeek ſhelter rather amongſt rocks and deſerts, than ly at the mercy of ſo many unreaſonable taſkmaſters, under whom they can hope for no other reward of their induſtry,—but rigorous ſlavery, made ſtill worſe by the tortures of unneceſſary mortifications.—I ſay, *unneceſſary*;—becauſe, where

there *is* a virtuous and good end propoſed, from any ſober inſtances of ſelf-denial and mortification,—GOD forbid we ſhould call them unneceſſary, or that we ſhould diſpute againſt a thing—from the abuſe to which it has been put;—and, therefore, what is ſaid in general upon this head, will be underſtood to reach no farther than where the practice is become a mixture of fraud and tyranny; but will nowiſe be interpreted to extend to thoſe ſelf-denials which the diſcipline of our holy church directs at this ſolemn ſeaſon,—which have been introduced by reaſon and good ſenſe at firſt, and have ſince been applied to ſerve no purpoſes—but thoſe of religion:—theſe, by reſtraining our appetites for a while, and withdrawing our thoughts from groſſer objects,—do, by a mechanical effect, diſpoſe us for cool and ſober reflections,—incline us to turn our eyes inwards upon ourſelves, and conſider what we are,—and what we have been doing;—for what intent we were ſent into the world, and what kind of characters we were deſigned to act in it.

It is neceſſary that the mind of man, at ſome certain periods, ſhould be prepared to enter into this account; and, without ſome ſuch diſcipline, to check the inſolence of unreſtrained appetites, and call home the conſcience,—the ſoul of man, capable as it is of brightneſs and perfection, would ſink down to the loweſt depths of darkneſs and brutality.

However true this is,—there ſtill appears no obligation to renounce the innocent delights of our beings, or to affect a ſullen diſtaſte againſt them. Nor, in truth,—can even the ſuppoſition of it be well admitted:—for pleaſures ariſing from the free and natural exerciſe of the faculties of the mind and body, to talk them down, is like talking againſt the frame and mechaniſm of human nature, and would be no leſs ſenſeleſs than the diſputing againſt the burning of fire, or falling downwards of a ſtone. Beſides this,—man is ſo contrived, that he ſtands in need of frequent repairs;—both mind and body are apt to ſink and grow inactive under long and cloſe attention; and, therefore, muſt be reſtored by proper recruits. Some part of our time may doubtleſs innocently and lawfully be employed in actions merely diverting;—and whenever ſuch indulgences become criminal, it is ſeldom the nature of the actions themſelves,—but the exceſs, which makes them ſo.

But ſome one may here aſk,—By what rule are we to judge of exceſs in theſe caſes?—If the enjoyment of the ſame ſort of pleaſures may be either innocent or guilty, according to the uſe or abuſe of them,—how ſhall we be certified where the boundaries ly?—or be ſpeculative enough to know how far we may go with ſafety?—I anſwer, there are very few who are not caſuiſts enough to make a right judgment in this point.—For, ſince one

principal reaſon, why GOD may be ſuppoſed to allow pleaſure in this world, ſeems to be for the refreſhment and recruit of our ſouls and bodies, which, like clocks, muſt be wound up at certain intervals,—every man underſtands ſo much of the frame and mechaniſm of himſelf, to know how and when to unbend himſelf, with ſuch relaxations as are neceſſary to regain his natural vigour and cheerfulneſs, without which it is impoſſible he ſhould either be in a diſpoſition or capacity to diſcharge the ſeveral duties of his life.—Here then the partition becomes viſible.

Whenever we pay this tribute to our appetites, any farther than is ſufficient for the purpoſes for which they were firſt granted,—the action proportionably loſes ſome ſhare of its innocence. The ſurpluſage of what is unneceſſarily ſpent on ſuch occaſions, is ſo much of the little portion of our time negligently ſquandered, which, in prudence, we ſhould apply better; becauſe it was allotted us for more important uſes, and a different account will be required of it at our hands hereafter.

For this reaſon, does it not evidently follow, that many actions and purſuits, which are irreproachable in their own natures, may be rendered blameable and vicious, from this ſingle conſideration, "That they have made "us waſteful of the moments of this ſhort "and uncertain fragment of life, which "ſhould be almoſt one of our laſt prodiga-

" lities, ſince, of them all, the leaſt retriev-
" able ?"—Yet how often is diverſion, inſtead of amuſement and relaxation, made the art and buſineſs of life itſelf ?—Look round —What policy and contrivance is every day put in practice, for pre-engaging every day in the week, and parcelling out every hour of the day for one idleneſs or another,—for doing nothing,—or ſomething worſe than nothing ; and that with ſo much ingenuity, as ſcarce to leave a minute upon their hands to reproach them ? Though we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life,—yet how many people ſeem quite overſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the highways and ſtreets of the city, for gueſts to come and take it off their hands ?—If ſome of the more diſtreſsful objects of this kind were to ſit down and write a bill of their time, though partial as that of the unjuſt ſteward, when they found in reality, that the whole ſum of it, for many years, amounted to little more than this,—that they had roſe up to eat,—to drink,—to play,—and had laid down again, merely becauſe they were fit for nothing elſe :—when they looked back and beheld this fair ſpace, capable of ſuch heavenly improvements,—all ſcrawled over and defaced with a ſucceſſion of ſo many unmeaning cyphers—Good GOD !—how would they be aſhamed and confounded at the account !

With what reflections will they be able to ſupport themſelves in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away,—ſhould it happen, as it ſometimes does,—that they have ſtood idle even unto the eleventh hour?—We have not always power, and are not always in a temper, to impoſe upon ourſelves. When the edge of appetite is worn down, and the ſpirits of youthful days are cooled, which hurried us on in a circle of pleaſure and impertinence, then reaſon and reflection will have the weight which they deſerve?—afflictions, or the bed of ſickneſs, will ſupply the place of conſcience;—and, if they ſhould fail,—old age will overtake us at laſt,—and ſhow us the paſt purſuits of life,—and force us to look upon them in their true point of view.—If there is any thing more to caſt a cloud upon ſo melancholy a proſpect as this ſhows us,—it is ſurely the difficulty and hazard of having all the work of the day to perform in the laſt hour;—of making an atonement to GOD, when we have no ſacrifice to offer him, but the dregs and infirmities of thoſe days, when we could have no pleaſure in them.

How far GOD may be pleaſed to accept ſuch late and imperfect ſervices, is beyond the intention of this diſcourſe. Whatever ſtreſs ſome may lay upon it,—a deathbed repentance is but a weak and ſlender plank to truſt our all upon.—Such as it is; to that, and GOD's infinite mercies, we commit them, who

will not employ that time and opportunity he has given, to provide a better ſecurity.

That we may all make a right uſe of the time allotted us,—GOD grant, through the merits of his Son JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

ON ENTHUSIASM.

St JOHN xv. 5.——*For without me, ye can do nothing.*

OUR SAVIOUR, in the former part of the verſe, having told his diſciples,—That he was the vine, and that they were only branches;—intimating, in what a degree their good fruits, as well as the ſucceſs of all their endeavours, were to depend upon his communications with them;—he cloſes the illuſtration with the inference from it, in the words of the text—For without me, ye can do nothing. In the 11th chapter to the Romans, where the manner is explained, in which a Chriſtian ſtands by faith,—there is a like illuſtration made uſe of, and probably with an eye to this,—where St Paul inſtructs us,—that a good man ſtands as the branch of a wild olive does, when it is grafted into a good olive tree;—and that is—it flouriſhes not through its own virtue, but in virtue of the root,—and ſuch a root as is naturally not its own.

It is very remarkable in that paſſage,—that the apoſtle calls a bad man a wild olive *tree*, —not barely a branch (as in the other caſe) but a tree, which having a root of its own, ſupports itſelf, and ſtands in its own ſtrength, and brings forth its own fruit.—And ſo does every bad man in reſpect of the wild and ſour fruit of a vicious and corrupt heart.—According to the reſemblance,—if the apoſtle intended it,—he is a tree,—has a root of his own,—and fruitfulneſs, ſuch as it is, with a power to bring it forth without help. But, in reſpect of religion, and the moral improvements of virtue and goodneſs,—the apoſtle calls us, and reaſon tells us, we are no more than a branch; and all our fruitfulneſs, and all our ſupport,—depends ſo much upon the influence and communications of GOD,—that without him we can do nothing,—as our SAVIOUR declares in the text. There is ſcarce any point in our religion, wherein men have run into ſuch violent extremes, as in the ſenſes given to this, and ſuch like declarations in Scripture,—of our ſufficiency being of GOD; —ſome underſtanding them ſo, as to leave no meaning at all in them;—others—too much —the one interpreting the gifts and influences of the Spirit, ſo as to deſtroy the truth of all ſuch promiſes and declarations in the goſpel;—the other carrying their notions of them ſo high, as to deſtroy the reaſon of the goſpel itſelf,—and render the chriſtian reli-

gion, which consists of sober and consistent doctrines,—the most intoxicated,—the most wild and unintelligible institution, that ever was in the world.

This being premised, I know not how I can more seasonably engage your attention this day, than by a short examination of each of these errors;—in doing which, as I shall take some pains to reduce both the extremes of them to reason, it will necessarily lead me, at the same time, to mark the safe and true doctrine of our church, concerning the promised influences and operations of the Spirit of GOD upon our hearts;—which, however depreciated through the first mistake, or boasted of beyond measure through the second,—must, nevertheless, be so limited and understood, as, on one hand, to make the gospel of CHRIST consistent with itself, and, on the other, to make it consistent with reason and common sense.

If we consider the many express declarations, wherein our SAVIOUR tells his followers, before his crucifixion,—That GOD would send his Spirit the Comforter amongst them, to supply his place in their hearts;—and, as in the text,—that without him they could do nothing:—if we conceive them as spoken to his disciples with an immediate view to the emergencies they were under, from their *natural* incapacities of finishing the great work he had left them, and building upon that large

foundation he had laid;—without some extraordinary help and guidance to carry them through,—no one can dispute that evidence and confirmation which was afterwards given of its truth. As our LORD's disciples were illiterate men, consequently unskilled in the arts and acquired ways of persuasion,—unless this want had been supplied, the first obstacle to their labours must have discouraged and put an end to them for ever. As they had no language but their own,—without the gift of tongues, they could not have preached the gospel except in Judea: and as they had no authority of their own,—without the supernatural one of signs and wonders, they could not vouch for the truth of it beyond the limits where it was first transacted. In this work, doubtless, all their sufficiency and power of acting was immediately from GOD;—his holy Spirit, as he had promised them, so it gave them, a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist. So that, without him—without these extraordinary gifts, in the most literal sense of the words, they *could* do nothing.—But, besides this plain application of the text, to those particular persons and times, when GOD's Spirit was poured down in that signal manner held sacred to this day,—there is something in them to be extended farther, which christians of all ages—and, I hope, of all denominations, have still a claim and title

in,—and that is, the ordinary aſſiſtance and influences of the Spirit of GOD in our hearts, for moral and virtuous improvements;—theſe, both in their natures, as well as intentions, being altogether different from the others above mentioned, conferred upon the diſciples of our LORD.—The one were miraculous gifts,—in which the endowed perſon contributed nothing, which advanced human nature above itſelf, and raiſed all its projectile ſprings above their fountains; enabling them to ſpeak and act ſuch things, and in ſuch manner, as was impoſſible for men not inſpired, and preternaturally upheld. In the other caſe, the helps ſpoken of were the influences of GOD's Spirit, which upheld us from falling below the dignity of our nature:—that divine aſſiſtance which graciouſly kept us from falling, and enabled us to perform the holy profeſſions of our religion. Though theſe are equally called ſpiritual gifts,—they are not, as in the firſt caſe, the entire works of the Spirit,—but the calm co-operations of it with our own endeavours; and are ordinarily what every ſincere and well-diſpoſed chriſtian has reaſon to pray for, and expect, from the ſame fountain of ſtrength, who has promiſed to give his holy Spirit to them that aſk it.

From this point, which is the true doctrine of our church,—the two parties begin to divide both from it and each other;—each of

them equally misapplying these passages of Scripture, and wresting them to extremes equally pernicious.——

To begin with the first; of whom, should you inquire the explanation and meaning of this, or of other texts,—wherein the assistance of GOD's grace and holy Spirit is implied as necessary to sanctify our nature, and enable us to serve and please GOD?——they will answer—That no doubt all our parts and abilities are the gifts of GOD,—who is the original author of our nature,—and, of consequence, of all that belongs thereto.—"That, as by "him we live, and move, and have our being,"—we must, in course, depend upon him for all our actions whatsoever,—since we must depend upon him even for our life, and for every moment of its continuance.—That, from this view of our state and natural dependence, it is certain, they will say,—We can do nothing without his help.—But then, they will add,—that it concerns us no farther as *christians*, than as we are *men*;—the sanctity of our lives, the religious habits and improvements of our hearts, in no other sense depending upon GOD, than the most indifferent of our actions, or the natural exercise of any of the other powers he has given us.—Agreeably with this,—that the spiritual gifts spoken of in Scripture, are to be understood by way of accommodation, to signify the natural or acquired gifts of a man's mind,—such as me-

mory, fancy, wit, and eloquence; which, in a ſtrict and philoſophical ſenſe, may be called ſpiritual;—becauſe they tranſcend the mechanical powers of matter,—and proceed more or leſs from the rational ſoul, which is a ſpiritual ſubſtance.

Whether theſe ought, in propriety, to be called ſpiritual gifts, I ſhall not contend, as it ſeems a mere diſpute about words;—but it is enough that the interpretation cuts the knot, inſtead of untying it; and, beſides, explains away all kind of meaning in the above promiſes. And the error of them ſeems to ariſe, in the firſt place, from not diſtinguiſhing that theſe ſpiritual gifts,—if they muſt be called ſo,—ſuch as memory, fancy, and wit, and other endowments of the mind, which are known by the name of natural parts, belong merely to us as men; and whether the different degrees, by which we excel each other in them, ariſe from a natural difference of our ſouls,—or a happier diſpoſition of the organical parts of us. They are ſuch, however, as GOD originally beſtows upon us, and with which, in a great meaſure, we are ſent into the world. But the moral gifts of the Holy Ghoſt,—which are more commonly called the fruits of the Spirit,—cannot be confined within this deſcription.—We come not into the world equipped with virtues, as we do with talents;—if we did, we ſhould come into the world with that which robbed

virtue of its beſt title, both to preſent commendation, and future reward. The gift of continency depends not, as theſe affirm, upon a mere coldneſs of the conſtitution—or patience and humility from an inſenſibility of it;—but they are virtues inſenſibly wrought in us by the endeavours of our own wills, and concurrent influences of a gracious agent;—and the religious improvements ariſing from thence, are ſo far from being the effects of nature, and a fit diſpoſition of the ſeveral parts and organical powers given us,—that the contrary is true;—namely,—that the ſtream of our affections and appetites, but too naturally carries us the other way.—For this, let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and reflect what has paſſed within him, in the ſeveral conflicts of meekneſs,—temperance,—chaſtity,—and other ſelf-denials,—and he will need no better argument for his conviction.—

This hint leads to the true anſwer to the above miſinterpretation of the text,—That we depend upon GOD in no other ſenſe for our virtues,—than we neceſſarily do for every thing elſe; and that the fruits of the Spirit are merely the determinations and efforts of our own reaſon,—and as much our own accompliſhments, as any other improvements are the effect of our own diligence and induſtry.

This account, by the way, is oppoſite to the apoſtle's;—who tells us—It is GOD that

worketh in us, both to do and will, of his good pleaſure.—It is true,—though we are born ignorant,—we can make ourſelves ſkilful;—we can acquire arts and ſciences by our own application and ſtudy.—But the caſe is not the ſame in reſpect of goodneſs.—We can acquire arts and ſciences, becauſe we ly under no natural indiſpoſition, or backwardneſs, to that acquirement.—For nature, though it be corrupt, yet ſtill it is curious and buſy after knowledge.—But it does not appear, that, to goodneſs and ſanctity of manners, we have the ſame natural propenſity.—Luſts within, and temptations without, ſet up ſo ſtrong a confederacy againſt it, as we are never able to ſurmount by our own ſtrength.—However firmly we may think we ſtand,—the beſt of us are but upheld, and graciouſly kept upright; and whenever this divine aſſiſtance is withdrawn,—or ſuſpended,—all hiſtory, eſpecially the ſacred, is full of melancholy inſtances of what man is, when GOD leaves him to himſelf,—that he is even a thing of nought.

Whether it was from a conſcious experience of this truth in themſelves,—or ſome traditions handed from the ſcripture account of it;—or that it was, in ſome meaſure, deducible from the principles of reaſon;—in the writings of ſome of the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers, we find the ſtrongeſt traces of the perſuaſion of GOD's aſſiſting men to virtue and probity of manners.—One

of the greateſt maſters of reaſoning amongſt the ancients, acknowledges, that nothing great and exalted can be achieved, *ſine divino afflatu*:—and Seneca to the ſame purpoſe—*nulla mens bona ſine deo*,—that no ſoul can be good without divine aſſiſtance.—Now, whatever comments may be put upon ſuch paſſages in their writings,—it is certain thoſe in ſcripture can receive no other, to be conſiſtent with themſelves, than what has been given.—And though, in vindication of human liberty, it is as certain, on the other hand,—that education, precepts, examples, pious inclinations, and practical diligence, are great and meritorious advances towards a religious ſtate;—yet the ſtate itſelf is got and finiſhed by God's grace, and the concurrence of his Spirit upon tempers thus happily prediſpoſed;—and honeſtly making uſe of ſuch fit means:—and unleſs thus much is underſtood from them,—the ſeveral expreſſions in ſcripture, where the offices of the Holy Ghoſt, conducive to this end, are enumerated;—ſuch as cleanſing, guiding, renewing, comforting, ſtrengthening and eſtabliſhing us,—are a ſet of unintelligible words, which may amuſe, but can convey little light to the underſtanding.

This is all I have time left to ſay at preſent upon the firſt error of thoſe, who, by too looſe an interpretation of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, explain away the whole ſenſe and meaning of them, and thereby ren-

der not only the promiſes, but the comforts of them too, of none effect.—Concerning which error, I have only to add this by way of extenuation of it,—that I believe the great and unedifying rout made about ſanctification and regeneration, in the middle of the laſt century,—and the enthuſiaſtic extravagances into which the communications of the Spirit have been carried by ſo many deluded or deluding people in this,—are two of the great cauſes which have driven many a ſober man into the oppoſite extreme, againſt which I have argued.—Now, if the dread of favouring too much of religion in their interpretations has done this ill ſervice,—let us inquire, on the other hand, whether the affectation of too *much* religion in the other extreme, has not miſled others full as far from truth, and farther from the reaſon and ſobriety of the goſpel, than the firſt.

I have already proved, by ſcripture arguments, that the influence of the holy Spirit of GOD is neceſſary to render the imperfect ſacrifice of our obedience pleaſing to our Maker.—He hath promiſed to "perfect his ſtrength in our weakneſs."—With this aſſurance we ought to be ſatisfied;—eſpecially ſince our SAVIOUR hath thought proper to mortify all ſcrupulous inquiries into operations of this kind, by comparing them to the wind, "which bloweth where it liſteth; and thou "heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell

" whence it cometh, or whither it goeth :—
" ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit."
—Let humble gratitude acknowledge the effect, unprompted by an idle curioſity to explain the cauſe.

We are told, without this aſſiſtance, we can do nothing ;—we are told, from the ſame authority, we can do all through CHRIST that ſtrengthens us.—We are commanded to "work
" out our own ſalvation with fear and trem-
" bling." The reaſon immediately follows ;
" for it is GOD that worketh in you, both to
" will and to do, of his own good pleaſure."
—From theſe, and many other repeated paſſages, it is evident, that the aſſiſtances of grace were not intended to deſtroy, but to co-operate with the endeavours of man,—and are derived from GOD, in the ſame manner as all natural powers.—Indeed, without this interpretation, how could the Almighty addreſs himſelf to man as a rational being ?—how could his actions be his own ?—how could he be conſidered as a blameable or rewardable creature ?

From this account of the conſiſtent opinions of a ſober-minded Chriſtian, let us take a view of the miſtaken enthuſiaſt.—See him oſtentatiouſly clothed with the outward garb of ſanctity, to attract the eyes of the vulgar.—See a cheerful demeanour, the natural reſult of an eaſy and ſelf-applauding heart, ſtudiouſly avoided as criminal.—See his countenance overſpread with a melancholy gloom

and deſpondence;—as if religion, which is evidently calculated to make us happy in this life as well as the next, was the parent of ſullenneſs and diſcontent. Hear him pouring forth his phariſaical ejaculations on his journey, or in the ſtreets.—Hear him boaſting of extraordinary communications with the GOD of all knowledge, and, at the ſame time, offending againſt the common rules of his own native language, and the plainer dictates of common ſenſe.—Hear him arrogantly thanking his GOD, that he is not as other men are; and, with more than papal uncharitableneſs, very liberally allotting the portion of the damned, to every Chriſtian whom he, partial judge, deems leſs perfect than himſelf—to every Chriſtian who is walking on in the paths of duty with ſober vigilance, aſpiring to perfection by progreſſive attainments, and ſeriouſly endeavouring, through a rational faith in his Redeemer, to make his calling and election ſure.

There have been no ſects in the Chriſtian world, however abſurd, which have not endeavoured to ſupport their opinions by arguments drawn from ſcripture, miſinterpreted or miſapplied.

We had a melancholy inſtance of this in our own country, in the laſt century,—when the church of CHRIST, as well as the government, during that period of national confuſion, was torn aſunder into various ſects and

factions;—when ſome men pretended to have ſcripture precepts, parables, or prophecies, to plead, in favour of the moſt impious abſurdities that falſehood could advance. The ſame ſpirit which prevailed amongſt the fanatics, ſeems to have gone forth among theſe modern enthuſiaſts.—Faith, the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of a Chriſtian, is defined by them, not as a rational aſſent of the underſtanding, to truths which are eſtabliſhed by indiſputable authority, but as a violent perſuaſion of mind, that they are inſtantaneouſly become the children of GOD—that the whole ſcore of their ſins is for ever blotted out, without the payment of one tear of repentance.—Pleaſing doctrine this to the fears and paſſions of mankind!—promiſing fair to gain proſelytes of the vicious and impenitent.

Pardons and indulgences are the great ſupport of papal power;—but theſe modern empirics in religion have improved upon the ſcheme,—pretending to have diſcovered an infallible *noſtrum* for all incurables,—ſuch as will preſerve them for ever.—And notwithſtanding we have inſtances of notorious offenders among the warmeſt advocates for ſinleſs perfection,—the charm continues powerful.—Did theſe viſionary notions of an heated imagination tend only to amuſe the fancy, they might be treated with contempt:—but when they depreciate all moral attainments;—when the ſuggeſtions of a frantic brain are

blaſphemouſly aſcribed to the holy Spirit of GOD;—when faith and divine love are placed in oppoſition to practical virtues,—they then become the objects of averſion. In one ſenſe, indeed, many of theſe deluded people demand our tendereſt compaſſion,—whoſe diſorder is in the head, rather than the heart;—and who call for the aid of a phyſician, who can cure the diſtempered ſtate of the body, rather than one who may ſooth the anxieties of the mind.

Indeed, in many caſes, they ſeem ſo much above the ſkill of either,—that unleſs GOD, in his mercy, rebuke this ſpirit of enthuſiaſm which is gone out amongſt us, no one can pretend to ſay, how far it may go, or what miſchiefs it may do, in theſe kingdoms.—Already it has taught us as much blaſphemous language,—and, if it goes on, by the ſamples given us in their journals, will fill us with as many legendary accounts of viſions and revelations, as we have formerly had from the church of Rome. And for any ſecurity we have againſt it,—when time ſhall ſerve, it may as effectually convert the profeſſors of it, even into popery itſelf,—conſiſtent with their own principles;—for, they have nothing more to do, than to ſay, that the ſpirit which inſpired them, has ſignified, that the pope is inſpired as well as they, and conſequently is infallible.—After which, I cannot ſee how they can poſſibly refrain going to maſs, conſiſtent with their own principles.—

Thus much for theſe two oppoſite errors; —the examination of which, has taken up ſo much time,—that I have little left to add, but to beg of GOD, by the aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, to preſerve us equally from both extremes, and enable us to form ſuch right and worthy apprehenſions of our holy religion,—that it may never ſuffer, through the coolneſs of our conceptions of it, on one hand,—or the immoderate heat of them, on the other;—but that we may at all times ſee it—as it is, and as it was deſigned by its bleſſed Founder,—as the moſt rational, ſober, and conſiſtent inſtitution that could have been given to the ſons of men.

NOW, to GOD, &c.

SERMON XXXIX.

ETERNAL ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

ECCLES. xii. 13.—*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter——Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

THE wise man, in the beginning of this book, had proposed it as a grand query to be discussed—'To find out what was 'good for the sons of men, which they should 'do under the heavens, all the days of their 'lives?'—that is, what was the fittest employment, and the chief and proper business, which they should apply themselves to in this world.—And here, in the text, after a fair discussion of the question, he asserts it to be the business of religion;—the fearing God, and keeping his commandments.—This was the conclusion of the whole matter—and the natural result of all his debates and inquiries.—And I am persuaded, the more observations we make upon the short life of man—the more we experience—and the longer trials we have of the world—and the several pretensions it offers to our happiness,—the more we shall be engaged to think, like him—that we can never find what we look for in any other thing which we do under the heavens, except in

that of duty and obedience to God.—In the courſe of the wiſe man's examination of this point—we find a great many beautiful reflections upon human affairs, all tending to illuſtrate the concluſion he draws; and as they are ſuch as are apt to offer themſelves to the thoughts of every ſerious and conſiderate man—I cannot do better than renew the impreſſions—by retouching the principal arguments of his diſcourſe—before I proceed to the general uſe and application of the whole.

In the former part of his book, he had taken into his conſideration thoſe ſeveral ſtates of life to which men uſually apply themſelves for happineſs;—firſt, learning—wiſdom;—next, mirth—jollity and pleaſure;—then, power and greatneſs—riches and poſſeſſions.—All of which, are ſo far from anſwering the end for which they were at firſt purſued—that, by a great variety of arguments—he proves them ſeverally to be ſo many 'ſore travels which GOD hath given to the ſons of 'men to be exerciſed therewith;'—and, inſtead of being any, or all of them, our proper end and employment, or ſufficient to our happineſs—he makes it plain, by a ſeries of obſervations upon the life of man—that they are ever likely to end with others where they had done with him—that is, in vanity and vexation of ſpirit.

Then he takes notice of the ſeveral accidents of life, which perpetually rob us of

what little ſweets the fruition of theſe objects might ſeem to promiſe us—both with regard to our endeavours and our perſons in this world.

1ſt, With regard to our endeavours—He ſhews that the moſt likely ways and means are not always effectual for the attaining of their end;—that, in general, the utmoſt that human counſels can provide for is, to take care, when they contend in a race, that they be ſwifter than thoſe who run againſt them;—or, when they are to fight a battle, that they be ſtronger than thoſe whom they are to encounter.—And yet afterwards, in the ninth chapter, he obſerves, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong,—neither yet bread to the wiſe—nor yet riches to men of underſtanding—nor favour to men of ſkill;—but time and chance happens to them all:—That there are ſecret workings in human affairs, which overrule all human contrivance, and counterplot the wiſeſt of our counſels, in ſo ſtrange and unexpected a manner, as to caſt a damp upon our beſt ſchemes, and warmeſt endeavours.

And then, for thoſe accidents to which our perſons are as liable as our labours, he obſerves theſe three things:—firſt the natural infirmities of our bodies, which alternately lay us open to the ſad changes of pain and ſickneſs,—which, in the fifth chapter, he ſtyles wrath and ſorrow; under which, when a man

lies languiſhing, none of his worldly enjoyments will ſignify much.—Like one that ſingeth ſongs with a heavy heart,—neither mirth,—nor power,—nor riches, ſhall afford him eaſe;—nor will all their force be able ſo to ſtay the ſtroke of nature,—'but that he 'ſhall be cut off in the midſt of his days, and 'then all his thoughts periſh.'—Or elſe, what is no uncommon ſpectacle,—in the midſt of all his luxury,—he may waſte away the greateſt part of his life with much wearineſs and anguiſh; and with the long torture of an unrelenting diſeaſe, he may wiſh himſelf to go down into the grave, and to be ſet at liberty from all his poſſeſſions, and all his miſery, at the ſame time.

2dly, If it be ſuppoſed,—that by the ſtrength of ſpirits, and the natural cheerfulneſs of a man's temper, he ſhould eſcape theſe, 'and live many years, and rejoice in them all,'—which is not the lot of many;—yet, 'he 'muſt remember the days of darkneſs;'—that is,—they who devote themſelves to a perpetual round of mirth and pleaſure,—cannot ſo manage matters as to avoid the thoughts of their *future ſtate*, and the anxiety about what ſhall become of them hereafter, when they are to depart out of this world;—that they cannot ſo crowd their heads, and fill up their time with other matters,—but that the remembrance of this will ſometimes be uppermoſt,—and thruſt itſelf upon their minds

whenever they are retired and ſerious.—And as this will naturally preſent to them a dark proſpect of their future happineſs,—it muſt, at the ſame time, prove no ſmall damp and allay to what they would enjoy at preſent.

But, in the third place—Suppoſe a man ſhould be able to avoid ſickneſs,—and to put the trouble of *theſe thoughts* likewiſe far from him,—yet there is ſomething elſe which he cannot poſſibly decline;—old age will unavoidably ſteal upon him,—with all the infirmities of it,—when (as he expreſſes it) 'the 'grinders ſhall be few, and appetite ceaſes,—'when thoſe who look out of the windows 'ſhall be darkened, and the keepers of the 'houſe ſhall tremble;'—when a man ſhall become a burden to himſelf, and to his friends;—when, perhaps, thoſe of his neareſt relations, whom he hath moſt obliged by kindneſs, ſhall think it time for him to depart, to creep off the ſtage, and make room for the ſucceeding generations.

And then, after a little funeral pomp of *mourners going about the ſtreets*,—a man ſhall be buried out of the way, and in a year or two be as much forgotten, as if he had never exiſted.—For there is no remembrance (ſays he) of the wiſe, more than the fool;—ſeeing that which now is, in the days to come ſhall be forgotten; every day producing ſomething which ſeems new and ſtrange, to take up

mens talk and wonder, and to drown the memory of former perſons and actions.—

And I appeal to any rational man, whether theſe are not ſome of the moſt material reflections about human affairs,—which occur to every one who gives himſelf the leaſt leiſure to think about them.—Now, from all theſe premiſes put together, Solomon infers this ſhort concluſion in the text,—That to fear GOD, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man;—that, to be ſerious in the matter of religion, and careful about our future ſtate, is that which, after all our other experiments, will be found to be our chief happineſs,—our greateſt intereſt,—our greateſt wiſdom,—and that which moſt of all deſerves our care and application.—This muſt ever be the laſt reſult, and the upſhot of every wiſe man's obſervations upon all theſe tranſitory things, and upon the vanity of their ſeveral pretences to our well-being;—and we may depend upon it, as an everlaſting truth,—that we can never find what we ſeek for in any other courſe, or any other object,—but this one;—and the more we know and think, and the more experience we have of the world, and of ourſelves, the more we are convinced of this truth, and led back by it to reſt our ſouls upon that GOD from whence we came.—Every conſideration upon the life of man tends to engage us to this point,—to be in earneſt in the concernment of religion;—to

love and fear GOD ;—to provide for our true intereſt,—and do ourſelves the moſt effectual ſervice,—by devoting ourſelves to him,—and always thinking of him,—as he is the true and final happineſs of a reaſonable and an immortal ſpirit.

And indeed, one would think it next to impoſſible,—did not the commonneſs of the thing take off from the wonder,—that a man who thinks at all,—ſhould let his whole life be a contradiction to ſuch obvious reflections.

The vanity and emptineſs of worldly goods and enjoyments,—the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life,—the unalterable event hanging over our heads,—'that, in a few days, we 'muſt all of us go to that place from whence 'we ſhall not return ;'—the certainty of this,—the uncertainty of the time when,—the immortality of the ſoul,—the doubtful and momentous iſſues of eternity,—the terrors of damnation, and the glorious things which are ſpoken of the city of GOD, are meditations ſo obvious, and ſo naturally check and block up a man's way,—are ſo very intereſting, and, above all, ſo unavoidable,—that it is aſtoniſhing how it was poſſible, at any time, for mortal man to have his head full of any thing elſe.—And yet, was the ſame perſon to take a view of the ſtate of the world,—how ſlight an obſervation would convince him, that the wonder lay, in fact, on the other ſide ;—and that, as wiſely as we all diſcourſe and philo-

ſophize *de contemptu mundi et fuga ſeculi*;—yet, for one who really acts in the world—conſiſtent with his own reflections upon it,—there are multitudes who ſeem to take aim at nothing higher;—and, as empty a thing as it is—are ſo dazzled with it, as to think it meet to build tabernacles of reſt upon it, and ſay, *It is good to be here.*—Whether, as an able inquirer into this paradox gueſſes,—whether it is, that men do not heartily believe ſuch a thing as a future ſtate of happineſs and miſery,—or, if they do,—that they do not actually and ſeriouſly conſider it,—but ſuffer it to ly dormant and inactive within them,—and ſo are as little affected with it, as if, in truth, they believed it not;—or whether they look upon it through that end of the perſpective which repreſents it as afar off,—and ſo are more forcibly drawn by the nearer, though the leſſer loadſtone;—whether theſe, or whatever other cauſe may be aſſigned for it,—the obſervation is inconteſtible,—that the bulk of mankind, in paſſing through this vale of miſery,—uſe it *not as a well* to refreſh and allay,—but fully to quench and ſatisfy their thirſt;—minding, or (as the apoſtle ſays) reliſhing earthly things,—making them the end and ſum-total of their deſires and wiſhes,—and, in one word,—loving this world—juſt as they are commanded to love GOD;—that is,—*with all their heart, with all their ſoul,*—with all their mind and ſtrength.—But this is not the

ſtrangeſt part of this paradox. A man ſhall not only lean and reſt upon the world with his whole ſtreſs,—but, in many inſtances, ſhall live notoriouſly bad and vicious :—when he is reproved, he ſhall ſeem convinced ;—when he is obſerved, he ſhall be aſhamed ;—when he purſues his ſin, he will do it in the dark ;—and when he has done it, ſhall even be diſſatisfied with himſelf :—yet ſtill, this ſhall produce no alteration in his conduct.—Tell him he ſhall one day die ;—or bring the event ſtill nearer,—and ſhow, that, according to the courſe of nature, he cannot poſſibly live many years,—he will ſigh, perhaps, and tell you, he is convinced of that, as much as reaſon and experience can make him :—proceed, and urge to him,—that after death comes judgement, and that he will certainly there be dealt with by a juſt GOD according to his actions ;—he will thank GOD he is no deiſt,—and tell you, with the ſame grave face,—he is thoroughly convinced of that too ;—and as he believes,—no doubt, he trembles too :—and yet, after all, with all this conviction upon his mind, you will ſee him ſtill perſevere in the ſame courſe,—and commit his ſin with as certain an event and reſolution, as if he knew no argument againſt it.—Theſe notices of things, however terrible and true, paſs through his underſtanding as an eagle through the air, that leaves no path behind.

So that, upon the whole, inſtead of abounding with occaſions to ſet us ſeriouſly on thinking,—the world might diſpenſe with many more calls of this kind;—and were they ſeven times as many as they are,—conſidering what inſufficient uſe we make of thoſe we have, all, I fear, would be little enough to bring theſe things to our remembrance as often, and engage us to lay them to our hearts with that affectionate concern, which the weight and intereſt of them requires at our hands.—Sooner or later, the moſt inconſiderate of us all ſhall find, with Solomon,—that to do this effectually, is the whole duty of man.

And I cannot conclude this diſcourſe upon his words, better, than with a ſhort and earneſt exhortation, that the ſolemnity of this ſeaſon,—and the meditations to which it is devoted, may lead you up to the true knowledge and practice of the ſame point, of fearing GOD and keeping his commandments,—and convince you, as it did him, of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of making that the buſineſs of a man's life, which is the chief end of his being,—the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of his ſoul.

Which may GOD grant, for the ſake of JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XL.

ASA: A THANKSGIVING SERMON.

2 CHRON. XV. 14.—*And they ſware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with ſhouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.—And all the men of Judah rejoiced at the oath.*

IT will be neceſſary to give a particular account of what was the occaſion, as well as the nature of the oath which the men of Judah ſware unto the LORD;—which will explain, not only the reaſons why it became a matter of ſo much joy to them, but likewiſe admit of an application ſuitable to the purpoſes of this ſolemn aſſembly.

Abijah, and Aſa his ſon, were ſucceſſive kings of Judah.—The firſt came to the crown at the cloſe of a long, and, in the end, a very unſucceſsful war, which had gradually waſted the ſtrength and riches of his kingdom.

He was a prince endowed with the talents which the emergencies of his country required, and ſeemed born to make Judah a victorious, as well as a happy people.—The conduct and great ſucceſs of his arms againſt Jeroboam, had well eſtabliſhed the firſt;—but his kingdom, which had been ſo many years the

ſeat of a war, had been ſo waſted and bewildered, that his reign, good as it was, was too ſhort to accompliſh the latter.—He died, and left the work unfiniſhed for his ſon.—Aſa ſucceeded, in the room of Abijah his father, with the trueſt notions of religion and government that could be derived either from reaſon or experience.—His reaſon told him, that God ſhould be worſhipped in ſimplicity and ſingleneſs of heart;—therefore he took away the altars of the ſtrange gods, and broke down their images.—His experience told him, that the moſt ſucceſsful wars, inſtead of invigorating, more generally drained away the vitals of government,—and, at the beſt, ended but in a brighter and more oſtentatious kind of poverty and deſolation;—therefore he laid aſide his ſword, and ſtudied the arts of ruling Judah with peace.—Conſcience would not ſuffer Aſa to ſacrifice his ſubjects to private views of ambition,—and wiſdom forbade he ſhould ſuffer them to offer up themſelves to the pretence of public ones;—ſince enlargement of empire, by the deſtruction of its people, (the natural and only valuable ſource of ſtrength and riches); was a diſhoneſt and miſerable exchange.—And however well the glory of a conqueſt might appear in the eyes of a common beholder, yet, when bought at that coſtly rate, a father to his country would behold the triumph which attended it, and weep as it paſſed by him.—Amidſt all

the glare and jollity of the day, the parent's eyes would fix attentively upon his child:—he would diſcern him drooping under the weight of his attire, without ſtrength or vigour, his former beauty and comelineſs gone off:—he would behold the coat of many colours ſtained with blood, and cry,—Alas! they have decked thee with a parent's pride, but not with a parent's care and foreſight.

With ſuch affectionate ſentiments of government, and juſt principles of religion, Aſa began his reign:—a reign marked out with new æras, and a ſucceſſion of happier occurrences, than what had diſtinguiſhed former days.

The juſt and gentle ſpirit of the prince, inſenſibly ſtole into the breaſts of the people.—The men of Judah turned their ſwords into ploughſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks.—By induſtry and virtuous labour, they acquired what by ſpoil and rapine they might have ſought after long in vain.—The traces of their late troubles ſoon began to wear out.—The cities, which had become ruinous and deſolate (the prey of famine and the ſword) were now rebuilt, fortified, and made populous.—Peace, ſecurity, wealth and proſperity, ſeemed to compoſe the whole hiſtory of Aſa's reign.—O Judah! what could then have been done more than what was done to make thy people happy?

What one bleſſing was withheld, that thou ſhouldſt ever withhold thy thankfulneſs?—

That thou didſt not continually turn thy eyes towards heaven with an habitual ſenſe of GOD's mercies, and devoutly praiſe him for ſetting Aſa over you?

Were not the public bleſſings, and the private enjoyments which every man of Judah derived from them, ſuch, as to make the continuance of them deſirable?—and what other way was there to effect it, than to ſwear unto the LORD, with all your hearts and ſouls, to perform the covenant made with your fathers?—to ſecure that favour and intereſt with the almighty Being, without which the wiſdom of this world is fooliſhneſs, and the beſt connected ſyſtems of human policy are ſpeculative and airy projects, without foundation or ſubſtance.—The hiſtory of their own exploits and eſtabliſhment ſince they had become a nation, was a ſtrong confirmation of this doctrine.

But too free and uninterrupted a poſſeſſion of GOD ALMIGHTY's bleſſings, ſometimes (though it ſeems ſtrange to ſuppoſe it) even tempts men to forget him, either from a certain depravity and ingratitude of nature, not to be wrought upon by goodneſs,—or that they are made by it too paſſionately fond of the preſent hour, and too thoughtleſs of its great Author, whoſe kind providence brought it about.—This ſeemed to have been the caſe

with the men of Judah:—for notwithſtanding all that GOD had done for them, in placing Abijah and Aſa his ſon over them, and inſpiring them with hearts and talents proper to retrieve the errors of the foregoing reign, and bring back peace and plenty to the dwellings of Judah;—yet there appears no record of any ſolemn and religious acknowledgement to GOD for ſuch ſignal favours.—The people ſat down in a thankleſs ſecurity, each man under his vine, to eat and drink, and roſe up to play;—more ſolicitous to enjoy their bleſſings, than to deſerve them.

But this ſcene of tranquillity was not to ſubſiſt without ſome change;—and it ſeemed as if providence at length had ſuffered the ſtream to be interrupted, to make them conſider whence it flowed, and how neceſſary it had been all along to their ſupport. The Ethiopians, ever ſince the beginning of Abijah's reign, until the tenth year of Aſa's, had been at peace, or, at leaſt, whatever ſecret enmity they bore, had made no open attacks upon the kingdom of Judah. And indeed, the bad meaſures which Rehoboam had taken, in the latter part of the reign which immediately preceded theirs, ſeemed to have ſaved the Ethiopians the trouble. For Rehoboam, though, in the former part of his reign, he dealt wiſely; yet when he had eſtabliſhed his kingdom, and ſtrengthened himſelf,—he forſook the laws of the LORD;—

he forſook the counſel which the old men gave him, and took counſel with the young men, which were brought up with him, and ſtood before him. Such ill-adviſed meaſures, in all probability, had given the enemies of Judah ſuch deciſive advantages over her, that they had ſat down contented, and for many years enjoyed the fruits of their acquiſitions. But the friendſhip of princes is ſeldom made up of better materials than thoſe which are every day to be ſeen in private life,—in which, ſincerity and affection are not at all conſidered as ingredients. Change of time and circumſtances, produces a change of counſels and behaviour. Judah, in length of time, had become a freſh temptation, and was worth fighting for. Her riches and plenty might firſt make her enemies covet, and then the remembrance of how cheap and eaſy a prey ſhe had formerly been, might make them not doubt of obtaining.

By theſe apparent motives, (or whether GOD, who ſometimes overrules the heart of man, was pleaſed to turn them by ſecret ones, to the purpoſes of his wiſdom) the ambition of the Ethiopians revived.—With an hoſt of men numerous as the ſand upon the ſea ſhore in multitude,—they had left their country, and were coming forwards to invade them.—What can Judah propoſe to do in ſo terrifying a criſis?—where can ſhe betake herſelf for refuge?—On one hand, her religion and

laws are too precious to be given up, or truſted to the hands of a ſtranger;—and, on the other hand, how can ſo ſmall a kingdom, juſt recovering ſtrength, ſurrounded by an army of a thouſand thouſand men, beſides chariots and horſes, be able to withſtand ſo powerful a ſhock?—But here it appeared, that thoſe who, in their proſperity, can forget GOD, do yet remember him in the day of danger and diſtreſs;—and can begin with comfort to depend upon his providence, when with comfort they can depend upon nothing elſe. For when Zerah, the Ethiopian, was come unto the valley of Zephatha at Maretha, Aſa, and all the men of Judah, and Benjamin, went out againſt him:—and as they went, they cried mightily unto GOD.—And Aſa prayed for his people, and he ſaid,—"O LORD! it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power;—help us, O LORD our GOD; for we reſt in thee, and in thy name we go againſt this multitude.—O LORD, thou art our GOD: let not man prevail againſt thee." Succeſs almoſt ſeemed a debt due to the piety of the prince, and the contrition of his people. So GOD ſmote the Ethiopians, and they could not recover themſelves:—for they were ſcattered, and utterly deſtroyed,—before the LORD, and before his hoſt. And as they returned to Jeruſalem from purſuing,—behold the Spirit of GOD came upon Aſariah, the

ſon of Oded. And he went out to meet Aſa, and he ſaid unto him,—Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin;—the LORD is with you, whilſt ye are with him; —and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you,—but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.—Nothing could more powerfully call home the conſcience, than ſo timely an expoſtulation. The men of Judah and Benjamin, ſtruck with a ſenſe of their late deliverance, and the many other felicities they had enjoyed ſince Aſa was king over them, they gathered themſelves together at Jeruſalem, in the third month, in the fifteenth year of Aſa's reign;—and they entered into a covenant to ſeek the LORD GOD of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their ſoul: and they ſware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with ſhouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets,—and all Judah rejoiced at the oath.

One may obſerve a kind of luxuriety in the deſcription which the holy hiſtorian gives of the tranſport of the men of Judah upon this occaſion.—And ſure, if ever matter of joy was ſo reaſonably founded, as to excuſe any exceſſes in the expreſſions of it,—this was one:—for without it,—the condition of Judah, though otherwiſe the happieſt, would have been, of all nations under heaven, the moſt miſerable.

Let us ſuppoſe, a moment, inſtead of being repulſed, that the enterpriſe of the Ethiopi-

ans had prospered against them;—like other grievous distempers, where the vitals are first attacked,—Asa, their king, would have been sought after, and have been made the first sacrifice. He must either have fallen by the sword of battle, or execution; or, what is worse, he must have survived the ruin of his country by flight,—and worn out the remainder of his days in sorrow, for the afflictions which were come upon it. In some remote corner of the world, the good king would have heard the particulars of Judah's destruction. He would have been told how the country, which had become dear to him by his paternal care, was now utterly laid waste, and all his labour lost;—how the fences which protected it were torn up, and the tender plant within, which he had so long sheltered, was cruelly trodden under foot and devoured. He would hear how Zerah, the Ethiopian, when he had overthrown the kingdom, thought himself bound in conscience to overthrow the religion of it too, and establish his own idolatrous one in its stead:—That, in pursuance of this, the holy religion, which Asa had reformed, had begun every where to be evil spoken of, and evil entreated:—

That it was first banished from the courts of the king's house, and the midst of Jerusalem,—and then fled for safety out of the way into the wilderness, and found no city to dwell in:—That Zerah had rebuilt the altars

of the ſtrange gods, which Aſa's piety had broken down,—and ſet up their images:—

That his commandment was *urgent*, that all ſhould fall down and worſhip the idol he had made:—That, to complete the tale of their miſeries, there was no proſpect of deliverance for any but the worſt of his ſubjects;—thoſe who, in his reign, had either leaned in their hearts towards theſe idolatries,—or whoſe principles and morals were ſuch, that all religions ſuited them alike:—But that the honeſt and conſcientious men of Judah, unable to behold ſuch abominations, hung down every man his head like a bulruſh, and put ſackcloth and aſhes under him.

This picture of Judah's deſolation, might be ſome reſemblance of what every one of Aſa's ſubjects would probably form to himſelf, the day he ſolemnized an exemption from it. And the tranſport was natural,—To ſwear unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with ſhouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets;—to rejoice at the oath which ſecured their future peace, and celebrate it with all external marks of gladneſs.

I have at length gone through the ſtory, which gave the occaſion to this religious act which is recorded of the men of Judah in the text.

I believe there is not one, in ſacred Scripture, that bids fairer for a parallel to our own times, or that would admit of an application more ſuitable to the ſolemnity of this day.

But men are apt to be ſtruck with likeneſſes in ſo different a manner, from the different points of view in which they ſtand, as well as their diverſity of judgments, that it is generally a very unacceptable piece of officiouſneſs to fix any certain degrees of approach.

In this caſe it ſeems ſufficient,—that thoſe who will diſcern the leaſt reſemblance, will diſcern enough to make them ſeriouſly comply with the devotion of the day;—and that thoſe who are affected with it in a ſtronger manner, and ſee the bleſſing of a proteſtant king in its faireſt light, with all the mercies which made way for it, will have ſtill more abundant reaſon to adore that good Being, who has all along protected it from the enemies which have riſen up to do it violence;—but more eſpecially, in a late inſtance, by turning down the counſels of the froward headlong,—and confounding the devices of the crafty,—ſo that their hands could not perform their enterprize.—Though this event, for many reaſons, will ever be told amongſt the felicities of theſe days;—yet for none more ſo,—than that it has given us a freſh mark of the continuation of GOD ALMIGHTY's favour to us:—a part of that great complicated bleſſing for which we are gathered together to return him thanks.

Let us, therefore, I beſeech you, endeavour to do it in the way which becomes wiſe men, and which is likely to be moſt acceptable;—and that is,—to purſue the intentions of his

providence, in giving us the occaſion—to become better men, and, by a holy and an honeſt converſation, make ourſelves capable of enjoying what GOD has done for us.—In vain ſhall we celebrate the day with a loud voice, and with ſhouting, and with trumpets,—if we do not do it likewiſe with the internal and more certain marks of ſincerity,—a reformation and purity in our manners. It is impoſſible a ſinful people can either be grateful to GOD, or properly loyal to their prince. They cannot be grateful to the one, becauſe they live not under a ſenſe of his mercies,—nor can they be loyal to the other, becauſe they daily offend in two of the tendereſt points which concern his welfare;—by firſt diſengaging the providence of GOD from taking our part, and then giving a heart to our adverſaries to lift their hands againſt us, who muſt know, that, if we forſake GOD, GOD will forſake us. Their hopes, their deſigns, their wickedneſs againſt us, can only be built upon ours towards GOD.

For if they did not think we did evil, they durſt not hope we could periſh.

Ceaſe, therefore, to do evil;—for by following righteouſneſs, you will make the hearts of your enemies faint, they will turn their backs againſt your indignation,—and their weapons will fall from their hands.

Which may GOD grant, through the merits and mediation of his SON JESUS CHRIST, to whom be all honour, &c. *Amen.*

SERMON XLI.

FOLLOW PEACE.

HEB. xii. 14.—*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

THE great end and design of our holy religion, next to the main view of reconciling us to GOD, was to reconcile us to each other;—by teaching us to subdue all those unfriendly dispositions in our nature, which unfit us for happiness, and the social enjoyment of the many blessings which GOD has enabled us to partake of in this world, miserable as it is, in many respects.—Could Christianity persuade the professors of it into this temper, and engage us, as its doctrine requires, to go on and exalt our natures, and, after the subduction of the most unfriendly of our passions, to plant, in the room of them, all those (more natural to the soil) humane and benevolent inclinations, which, in imitation of the perfections of GOD, should dispose us to extend our love and goodness to our fellow creatures, according to the extent of our abilities,—in like manner, as the goodness of GOD extends itself over all the works of the creation:—could this be accomplished,

the world would be worth living in;—and might be conſidered by us as a foretaſte of what we ſhould enter upon hereafter.

But ſuch a ſyſtem, you will ſay, is merely viſionary; and, conſidering man as a creature ſo beſet with ſelfiſhneſs, and other fretful paſſions that propenſity prompts him to,—though it is to be wiſhed, it is not to be expected.—But our religion enjoins us to approach as near this fair pattern as we can; and, if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men;—where the term—*if poſſible*—I own, implies it may not only be difficult, but ſometimes impoſſible.—Thus the words of the text,—Follow peace,—may by ſome be thought to imply,—that this deſirable bleſſing may ſometimes fly from us:—but ſtill we are required to follow it, and not ceaſe the purſuit, till we have uſed all warrantable methods to regain and ſettle it:—becauſe, adds the apoſtle, without this frame of mind, no man ſhall ſee the LORD. For heaven is the region, as well as the recompence, of peace and benevolence; and ſuch as do not deſire and promote it here, are not qualified to enjoy it hereafter.

For this cauſe, in Scripture language,—peace is always ſpoke of as the great and comprehenſive bleſſing, which included in it all manner of happineſs;—and, to wiſh peace to any houſe or perſon, was, in one word, to wiſh them all that was good and deſirable.—

Becauſe happineſs conſiſts in the inward complacency and ſatisfaction of the mind; and he who has ſuch a diſpoſition of ſoul, as to acquieſce and reſt contented with all the events of Providence, can want nothing this world can give him.—Agreeable to this,—that ſhort, but moſt comprehenſive hymn, ſung by angels at our SAVIOUR's birth, declaratory of the joy and happy ends of his incarnation,—after glory, in the firſt, to GOD,—the next note which ſounded was, Peace upon earth, and good-will to men.—It was a public wiſh of happineſs to mankind, and implied a ſolemn charge to purſue the means that would ever lead to it.—And, in truth, the good tidings of the goſpel, are nothing elſe but a grand meſſage and embaſſy of peace, to let us know, that our peace is made in heaven.

The prophet Iſaiah ſtyles our SAVIOUR the Prince of Peace, long before he came into the world; and, to anſwer the title, he made choice to enter into it at a time when all nations were at peace with each other; which was in the days of Auguſtus,—when the temple of Janus was ſhut, and all the alarms of war were huſhed and ſilenced throughout the world.—At his birth, the hoſt of heaven deſcended, and proclaimed peace on earth, as the beſt ſtate and temper the world could be in to receive and welcome the author of it. His future converſation and doctrine, here

upon earth, was every way agreeable with his peaceable entrance upon it;—the whole courſe of his life being but one great example of meekneſs, peace and patience. At his death, it was the only legacy he bequeathed to his followers:——My peace I give unto you.——How far this has taken place, or been actually enjoyed,—is not my intention to enlarge upon, any farther than juſt to obſerve how precious a bequeſt it was, from the many miſeries and calamities which have, and ever will, enſue from the want of it. If we look into the larger circle of the world;—what deſolations, diſſolutions of government, and invaſions of property,—what rapine, plunder, and profanation of the moſt ſacred rights of mankind, are the certain unhappy effects of it;—fields dyed in blood, the cries of orphans and widows, bereft of their beſt help, too fully inſtruct us.—Look into private life;—behold how good and pleaſant a thing it is to live together in unity;—it is like the precious ointment poured upon the head of Aaron, that run down to his ſkirts;—importing, that this balm of life is felt and enjoyed, not only by governors of kingdoms, but is derived down to the loweſt rank of life, and taſted in the moſt private receſſes;—all, from the king to the peaſant, are refreſhed with its bleſſings, without which, we can find no comfort in any thing this world can give.—It is this bleſſing gives every one to

ſit quietly under his vine, and reap the fruits of his labour and induſtry:—in one word,—which beſpeaks who is the beſtower of it.—It is that only which keeps up the harmony and order of the world, and preſerves every thing in it from ruin and confuſion.

There is one ſaying of our SAVIOUR's, recorded by St Matthew, which, at firſt ſight, ſeems to carry ſome oppoſition to this doctrine;—I came not to ſend peace on earth, but a ſword.—But this reaches no farther than the bare words, not entering ſo deep as to affect the ſenſe, or imply any contradiction;—intimating only,—that the preaching of the goſpel will prove, in the event, through ſundry unhappy cauſes,—ſuch as prejudices, the corruption of men's hearts, a paſſion for idolatry and ſuperſtition,—the occaſion of much variance and diviſion even amongſt neareſt relations;—yea, and oft-times of bodily death, and many calamities and perſecutions, which actually enſued upon the firſt preachers and followers of it. Or the words may be underſtood,—as a beautiful deſcription of the inward conteſts and oppoſition which Chriſtianity would occaſion in the heart of man,—from its oppoſitions to the violent paſſions of our nature,—which would engage him in a perpetual warfare. This was not only a ſword,—a diviſion betwixt neareſt kindred;—but it was dividing a man againſt himſelf; ſetting up an oppoſition to an intereſt long eſtabliſh-

ed,—ſtrong by nature,—more ſo by uncontrolled cuſtom.—This is verified, every hour, in the ſtruggles for maſtery betwixt the principles of the world, the fleſh, and the devil;—which ſet up ſo ſtrong a confederacy, that there is need of all the helps which reaſon and Chriſtianity can offer to bring them down.

But this contention is not that againſt which ſuch exhortations in the goſpel are levelled;—for the Scripture muſt be interpreted by Scripture, and be made conſiſtent with itſelf.—And we find, the diſtinguiſhing mark and doctrine, by which all men were to know who were Chriſt's diſciples,—was that benevolent frame of mind towards all our fellow-creatures, which, by itſelf, is a ſufficient ſecurity for the particular ſocial duty here recommended:—ſo far from meditations of war—for love thinketh no evil to his neighbour;—ſo far from doing any, it harbours not the leaſt thought of it; but, on the contrary, rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep.

This debt Chriſtianity has highly exalted; though it is a debt that we were ſenſible of before, and acknowledged to be owed to human nature,—which, as we all partake of,—ſo o[illegible]t we to pay it in a ſuitable reſpect. For, as men, we are allied together in the natural bond of brotherhood, and are members one of another.—We have the ſame Father in heaven, who made us, and takes care

of us all. Our earthly extraction too, is nearer alike, than the pride of the world cares to be reminded of:—for Adam was the father of us all, and Eve the mother of all living.—The prince and the beggar ſprung from the ſame ſtocks, as wide aſunder as the branches are.—So that, in this view, the moſt upſtart family may vie antiquity, and compare families with the greateſt monarchs.—We are all formed, too, of the ſame mould, and muſt equally return to the ſame duſt.—So that, to love our neighbour, and live quietly with him, is to live at peace with ourſelves.—He is but ſelf-multiplied, and enlarged into another form; and to be unkind or cruel to him, is but, as Solomon obſerves of the unmerciful, to be cruel to our own fleſh.—As a farther motive and engagement to this peaceable commerce with each other,—GOD has placed us all in one another's power by turns,—in a condition of mutual need and dependence.—There is no man ſo liberally ſtocked with earthly bleſſings, as to be able to live without another man's aid.—GOD, in his wiſdom, has ſo diſpenſed his gifts, in various kinds and meaſures, as to render us helpful, and make a ſocial intercourſe indiſpenſable.—The prince depends on the labour and induſtry of the peaſant;—and the wealth and honour of the greateſt perſons, are fed and ſupported from the ſame ſource.

This the apoſtle hath elegantly ſet forth to us, by the familiar reſemblance of the natural body; wherein there are many members, and all have not the ſame office; but the different faculties and operations of each, are for the uſe and benefit of the whole.—The eye ſees not for itſelf, but for the other members;—and is ſet up as a light to direct them:—the feet ſerve to ſupport and carry about the other parts; and the hands act and labour for them all. It is the ſame in ſtates and kingdoms, wherein there are many members, yet each in their ſeveral functions and employments; which, if peaceably diſcharged, are for the harmony of the whole ſtate.—Some are eyes and guides to the blind;—others, feet to the lame and impotent;—ſome ſupply the place of the head, to aſſiſt with counſel and direction;—others the hands, to be uſeful by their labour and induſtry. To make this link of dependence ſtill ſtronger,—there is a great portion of mutability in all human affairs, to make benignity of temper not only our duty, but our intereſt and wiſdom. There is no condition in life ſo fixed and permanent as to be out of danger, or the reach of change:—and we all may depend upon it, that we ſhall take our turns of wanting and deſiring. By how many unforeſeen cauſes may riches take wing!—The crowns of princes may be ſhaken; and the greateſt that ever awed the world have experienced what the turn of the

wheel can do. That which hath happened to one man, may befal another; and, therefore, that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR's ought to govern us in all our actions—Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo to them likewiſe. Time and chance happens to all;—and the moſt affluent may be ſtripped of all, and find his wordly comforts like ſo many withered leaves dropping from him.—Sure nothing can better become us, than hearts ſo full of our dependence, as to overflow with mercy, and pity, and good-will towards mankind.—To exhort us to this, is, in other words, to exhort us to follow peace with all men:—the firſt is the root,—this the fair fruit and happy product of it.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, in the bowels of mercy, let us put away anger, and malice, and evil-ſpeaking;—let us fly all clamour and ſtrife;—let us be kindly affected one to another,—following peace with all men, and holineſs, that we may ſee the LORD.

Which, GOD of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits of his Son, our LORD and SAVIOUR. *Amen.*

SERMON XLII.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

St John v. 39.—*Search the Scriptures.*

THAT things of the moſt ineſtimable uſe and value, for want of due application and ſtudy laid out upon them, may be paſſed by unregarded, nay, even looked upon with coldneſs and averſion, is a truth too evident to need enlarging on.—Nor is it leſs certain, that prejudices, contracted by an unhappy education, will ſometimes ſo ſtop up all the paſſages to our hearts, that the moſt amiable objects can never find acceſs, or bribe us by all their charms into juſtice and impartiality.—It would be paſſing the tendereſt reflection upon the age we live in, to ſay it is owing to one of theſe, that thoſe ineſtimable books, the Sacred Writings, meet ſo often with a diſreliſh (what makes the accuſation almoſt incredible) amongſt perſons who ſet up for men of taſte and delicacy; who pretend to be charmed with what they call beauties and nature in claſſical authors, and in other things would bluſh not to be reckoned amongſt ſound and impartial critics.—But ſo far has negligence and prepoſſeſſion ſtopped their ears

againſt the voice of the charmer, that they turn over thoſe awful ſacred pages with inattention and an unbecoming indifference, unaffected amidſt ten thouſand ſublime and noble paſſages, which, by the rules of ſound criticiſm and reaſon, may be demonſtrated to be truly eloquent and beautiful.

Indeed, the opinion of falſe Greek and barbarous language, in the Old and New Teſtament, had, for ſome ages, been a ſtumbling block to another ſet of men, who were profeſſedly great readers and admirers of the ancients.—The ſacred writings were, by theſe perſons, rudely attacked on all ſides; expreſſions which came not within the compaſs of their learning, were branded with barbariſm and ſoleciſm; words which ſcarce ſignified any thing, but the ignorance of thoſe who laid ſuch groundleſs charges on them. Preſumptuous man!—Shall he, who is but duſt and aſhes, dare to find fault with the words of that Being, who firſt inſpired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter; who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the infant eloquent!—Theſe perſons, as they attacked the inſpired writings on the foot of critics and men of learning, accordingly have been treated as ſuch: and though a ſhorter way might have been gone to work, which was,—that as their accuſations reached no farther than the bare words and phraſeology of the Bible, they in nowiſe affected the ſenti-

ments and ſoundneſs of the doctrines; which were conveyed with as much clearneſs and perſpicuity to mankind, as they could have been, had the language been written with the utmoſt elegance and grammatical nicety. And, even though the charge of barbarous idioms could be made out;—yet the cauſe of Chriſtianity was thereby nowiſe affected, but remained juſt in the ſtate they found it.—Yet, unhappily for them, they even miſcarried in their favourite point;—there being few, if any at all, of the Scripture expreſſions, which may not be juſtified by numbers of parallel modes of ſpeaking, made uſe of amongſt the pureſt and moſt authentic Greek authors.—This, an able hand amongſt us, not many years ago, has ſufficiently made out, and thereby baffled and expoſed all their preſumptuous and ridiculous aſſertions.—Theſe perſons, bad and deceitful as they were, are yet far outgone by a third ſet of men.—I wiſh we had not too many inſtances of them, who, like foul ſtomachs, that turn the ſweeteſt food to bitterneſs, upon all occaſions endeavour to make merry with ſacred Scripture, and turn every thing they meet with therein into banter and burleſque.—But as men of this ſtamp, by their exceſs of wickedneſs and weakneſs together, have entirely diſarmed us from arguing with them as reaſonable creatures, it is not only making them too conſiderable, but likewiſe to no purpoſe, to ſpend much time

about them; they being, in the language of the Apoſtle, creatures of no underſtanding, ſpeaking evil of things they know not, and ſhall utterly periſh in their own corruption.—Of theſe two laſt, the one is diſqualified for being argued with, and the other has no occaſion for it; they being already ſilenced.—Yet thoſe that were firſt mentioned, may not altogether be thought unworthy of our endeavours;—being perſons, as was hinted above, who, though their taſtes are ſo far vitiated that they cannot reliſh the ſacred Scriptures, yet have imaginations capable of being raiſed by the fancied excellencies of claſſical writers.—And indeed, theſe perſons claim from us ſome degree of pity, when, through the unſkilfulneſs of preceptors in their youth, or ſome other unhappy circumſtance in their education, they have been taught to form falſe and wretched notions of good writing.—When this is the caſe, it is no wonder they ſhould be more touched and affected with the dreſſed-up trifles and empty conceits of poets and rhetoricians, than they are with that true ſublimity and grandeur of ſentiment which glow throughout every page of the inſpired writings. By way of information, ſuch ſhould be inſtructed,—

There are two ſorts of eloquence; the one, indeed, ſcarce deſerves the name of it, which conſiſts chiefly in laboured and poliſhed periods, an over-curious and artificial arrange-

ment of figures, tinſelled over with a gaudy embelliſhment of words, which glitter, but convey little or no light to the underſtanding. This kind of writing is, for the moſt part, much affected and admired by people of weak judgment and vicious taſte, but is a piece of affectation and formality the ſacred writers are utter ſtrangers to.—It is a vain and boyiſh eloquence; and as it has always been eſteemed below the great geniuſes of all ages, ſo, much more ſo, with reſpect to thoſe writers who were actuated by the ſpirit of infinite wiſdom, and therefore wrote with that force and majeſty with which never man writ.—The other ſort of eloquence is quite the reverſe of this, and which may be ſaid to be the true characteriſtic of the holy Scriptures,—where the excellence does not ariſe from a laboured and far-fetched elocution, but from a ſurpriſing mixture of ſimplicity and majeſty, which is a double character, ſo difficult to be united, that it is ſeldom to be met with in compoſitions merely human.—We ſee nothing in holy writ, of affectation and ſuperfluous ornament. —As the infinite wiſe Being has condeſcended to ſtoop to our language, thereby to convey to us the light of revelation,—ſo has he been pleaſed graciouſly to accommodate it to us with the moſt natural and graceful plainneſs it would admit of.—Now, it is obſervable, that the moſt excellent profane authors, whether Greek or Latin, loſe moſt of their

graces, whenever we find them literally tranſlated.—Homer's famed repreſentation of Jupiter, in his firſt book;—his cried-up deſcription of a tempeſt;—his relation of Neptune's ſhaking the earth, and opening it to its centre;—his deſcription of Pallas's horſes, with numbers of other long-ſince admired paſſages,—flag, and almoſt vaniſh away, in the vulgar Latin tranſlation.

Let any one but take the pains to read the common Latin interpretation of Virgil, Theocritus, or even of Pindar, and one may venture to affirm, he will be able to trace out but few remains of the graces which charmed him ſo much in the original.—The natural concluſion from hence, is, that in the claſſical authors, the expreſſion, the ſweetneſs of the numbers, occaſioned by a muſical placing of words, conſtitute a great part of their beauties;—whereas, in the Sacred Writings, they conſiſt more in the greatneſs of the things themſelves, than in the words and expreſſions. The ideas and conceptions are ſo great and lofty in their own nature, that they neceſſarily appear magnificent in the moſt artleſs dreſs.—Look but into the Bible, and we ſee them ſhine through the moſt ſimple and literal tranſlations.——That glorious deſcription which Moſes gives of the creation of the heavens and the earth, which Longinus, the beſt critic the eaſtern world ever produced, was ſo juſtly taken with, has not loſt the leaſt whit

of its intrinſic worth; and, though it has undergone ſo many tranſlations, yet triumphs over all, and breaks forth with as much force and vehemence as in the original.—Of this ſtamp are numbers of paſſages throughout the Scriptures;—inſtance, that celebrated deſcription of a tempeſt, in the hundred and ſeventh pſalm;—thoſe beautiful reflections of holy Job, upon the ſhortneſs of life, and inſtability of human affairs, ſo judiciouſly appointed by our church, in her office for the burial of the dead;—that lively deſcription of a horſe of war, in the thirty-ninth chapter of Job, in which, from the 19th to the 26th verſe, there is ſcarce a word which does not merit a particular explication, to diſplay the beauties of.—I might add to theſe, thoſe tender and pathetic expoſtulations with the children of Iſrael, which run throughout all the prophets, which the moſt uncritical reader can ſcarce help being affected with.

"And now, O inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.—What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?—wherefore, when I expected that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?—And yet, ye ſay, the way of the LORD is unequal. Hear now, O houſe of Iſrael,—is not my way equal?—are not your ways unequal?—have I any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhould die, and not that

he ſhould return from his ways and live?—I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me.—The ox knows his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib,—but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider."—There is nothing in all the eloquence of the heathen world, comparable to the vivacity and tenderneſs of theſe reproaches;—there is ſomething in them ſo thoroughly affecting, and ſo noble and ſublime withal, that one might challenge the writings of the moſt celebrated orators of antiquity, to produce any thing like them. Theſe obſervations upon the ſuperiority of the inſpired penmen to heathen ones, in that which regards the compoſition, more conſpicuouſly hold good when they are conſidered upon the foot of hiſtorians.—Not to mention that profane hiſtories give an account only of human achievements and temporal events, which, for the moſt part, are ſo full of uncertainty and contradictions, that we are at a loſs where to ſeek for truth;—but that the ſacred hiſtory is the hiſtory of GOD himſelf,—the hiſtory of his omnipotence and infinite wiſdom, his univerſal providence, his juſtice and mercy, and all his other attributes, diſplayed under a thouſand different forms, by a ſeries of the moſt various and wonderful events that ever happened to any nation, or language.—Not to inſiſt upon this viſible ſuperiority in ſacred hiſtory,—there is yet another undoubted ex-

cellence the profane hiſtorians ſeldom arrive at, which is almoſt the diſtinguiſhing character of the ſacred ones; namely, that unaffected, artleſs manner of relating hiſtorical facts, —which is ſo entirely of a piece with every other part of the holy writings.—What I mean will be beſt made out by a few inſtances. —In the hiſtory of Joſeph, (which certainly is told with the greateſt variety of beautiful and affecting circumſtances), when Joſeph makes himſelf known, and weeps aloud upon the neck of his dear brother Benjamin, that all the houſe of Pharaoh heard him;—at that inſtant, none of his brethren are introduced as uttering aught, either to expreſs their preſent joy, or palliate their former injuries to him. On all ſides, there immediately enſues a deep and ſolemn ſilence;—a ſilence infinitely more eloquent and expreſſive, than any thing elſe that could have been ſubſtituted in its place.—Had Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy, or any of the celebrated claſſical hiſtorians, been employed in writing this hiſtory, when they came to this point, they would, doubtleſs, have exhauſted all their fund of eloquence in furniſhing Joſeph's brethren with laboured and ſtudied harangues; which, however fine they might have been in themſelves, would nevertheleſs have been unnatural, and altogether improper on the occaſion. For, when ſuch a variety of contrary paſſions broke in upon them,—what tongue was able to utter

their hurried and diſtracted thoughts?—When remorſe, ſurpriſe, ſhame, joy, and gratitude, ſtruggled together in their boſoms, how uneloquently would their lips have performed their duty!—how unfaithfully their tongues have ſpoken the language of their hearts!—In this caſe, ſilence was truly eloquent and natural; and tears expreſſed what oratory was incapable of.

If ever theſe perſons I have been addreſſing myſelf to, can be perſuaded to follow the advice in the text, of ſearching the Scriptures,—the work of their ſalvation will be begun upon its true foundation.—For, firſt, they will inſenſibly be led to admire the beautiful propriety of their language:—when a favourable opinion is conceived of this,—next, they will more cloſely attend to the goodneſs of the moral, and the purity and ſoundneſs of the doctrines.—The pleaſure of reading will ſtill be increaſed, by that near concern which they will find themſelves to have in thoſe many important truths, which they will ſee ſo clearly demonſtrated in the Bible, that grand charter of our eternal happineſs.—It is the fate of mankind, too often, to ſeem inſenſible of what they may enjoy at the eaſieſt rate.—What might not our neighbouring Romiſh countries, who groan under the yoke of popiſh impoſitions and prieſtcraft,—what might not thoſe poor miſguided creatures give, for the happineſs which we know not how to va-

lue,—of being born in a country where a church is eſtabliſhed by our laws, and encouraged by our princes,—which not only allows the free ſtudy of the Scriptures, but even exhorts and invites us to it;—a church that is a ſtranger to the tricks and artifice of having the Bible in an unknown tongue, to give the greater latitude to the deſigns of the clergy, in impoſing their own trumpery, and foiſting in whatever may beſt ſerve to aggrandize themſelves, or enſlave the wretches committed to their truſt.—In ſhort, our religion was not given us to raiſe our imaginations with ornaments of words, or ſtrokes of eloquence; but to purify our hearts, and lead us into the paths of righteouſneſs.—However, not to defend ourſelves,—when the attack is principally levelled at this point,—might give occaſion to our adverſaries to triumph, and charge us either with negligence or inability.—It is well known how willing the enemies of our religion are to ſeek occaſions againſt us;—how ready to magnify every mote in our eyes to the bigneſs of a beam;—how eager, upon the leaſt default, to inſult and cry out,—There, there! ſo would we have it:—not, perhaps, that we are ſo much the ſubject of malice and averſion, but that the licentious age ſeems bent upon bringing Chriſtianity into diſcredit at any rate; and, rather than miſs the aim, would ſtrike through the ſides of thoſe that

are ſent to teach it.—Thank GOD, the truth of our holy religion is eſtabliſhed with ſuch ſtrong evidence, that it reſts upon a foundation never to be overthrown, either by the open aſſaults, or cunning devices, of wicked and deſigning men.—The part we have to act, is, to be ſteady, ſober, and vigilant; to be ready to do every good work; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-ſuffering; to give occaſion of offence to no man; that, with well-doing, we may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men.

I ſhall cloſe all with that excellent collect of our church:——

Bleſſed LORD, who haſt cauſed all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning,—grant that we may in ſuchwiſe hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digeſt them, that, by patience and cómfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold faſt, the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, which thou haſt given us in thy Son, our SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST.

Now, to GOD the Father, &c.

SERMON XLIII.

PSALM XCV. 6, 7.

O come, let us worſhip and fall down before him:—for he is the Lord our God.——

IN this pſalm we find holy David taken up with the pious contemplation of GOD's infinite power, majeſty, and greatneſs:—he conſiders him as the ſovereign LORD of the whole earth, the maker and ſupporter of all things;—that by him the heavens were created, and all the hoſt of them:—that the earth was wiſely faſhioned by his hands;—he has founded it upon the ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods:—that we likewiſe, the people of his paſture, were raiſed up by the ſame creating hand, from nothing, to the dignity of rational creatures, made, with reſpect to our reaſon and underſtanding, after his own moſt perfect image.

It was natural to imagine, that ſuch a contemplation would light up a flame of devotion in any grateful man's breaſt; and accordingly, we find it break forth, in the words of the text, in a kind of religious rapture:—

O come, let us worſhip and fall down before him:—for he is the LORD our GOD.

Sure never exhortation to prayer and worſhip can be better enforced than upon this

principle,—that GOD is the Cauſe and Creator of all things;—that each individual being is upheld in the ſtation it was firſt placed, by the ſame hand which firſt formed it;—that all the bleſſings and advantages, which are neceſſary to the happineſs and welfare of beings on earth, are only to be derived from the ſame fountain;—and that the only way to do it, is to ſecure an intereſt in his favour, by a grateful expreſſion of our ſenſe for the benefits we have received, and an humble dependence upon him for thoſe we expect and ſtand in need of.—Whom have we in heaven, ſays the Pſalmiſt, but thee, O GOD, to look unto, or depend on;—to whom ſhall we pour out our complaints, and ſpeak of all our wants and neceſſities, but to thy goodneſs, which is ever willing to confer upon us whatever becomes us to aſk, and thee to grant?—becauſe thou haſt promiſed to be nigh unto all that call upon thee,—yea, unto all ſuch as call upon thee faithfully;—that thou wilt fulfil the deſire of them that fear thee, that thou wilt alſo hear their cry, and help them.

Of all duties, prayer certainly is the ſweeteſt and moſt eaſy.—There are ſome duties which may ſeem to occaſion a troubleſome oppoſition to the natural workings of fleſh and blood;—ſuch as the forgiveneſs of injuries, and the love of our enemies:—others, which will force us unavoidably into a perpetual ſtruggle with our paſſions,—which war a-

gainſt the ſoul;—ſuch as chaſtity,—temperance,—humility. There are other virtues, which ſeem to bid us forget our preſent intereſt for a while,—ſuch as charity and generoſity;—others that teach us to forget it at all times, and wholly to fix our affections on things above, and in no circumſtance to act like men that look for a continuing city here, but upon one to come, whoſe builder and maker is GOD. But this duty of prayer and thankſgiving to GOD—has no ſuch oppoſitions to encounter;—it takes no bullock out of thy field,—no horſe out of thy ſtable,—nor he-goat out of thy fold;—it coſteth no wearineſs of bones, no untimely watchings;—it requireth no ſtrength of parts, or painful ſtudy, but juſt to know and have a true ſenſe of our dependence, and of the mercies by which we are upheld:—and with this, in every place and poſture of body, a good man may lift up his ſoul unto the LORD his GOD.

Indeed, as to the frequency of putting this duty formally in practice, as the precept muſt neceſſarily have varied according to the different ſtations in which GOD has placed us;—ſo he has been pleaſed to determine nothing preciſely concerning it:—for, perhaps, it would be unreaſonable to expect, that the day-labourer, or he that ſupports a numerous family by the ſweat of his brow, ſhould ſpend as much of his time in devotion, as the man of leiſure and unbounded wealth.—This, how-

ever, in the general, may hold good, that we are bound to pay this tribute to GOD, as often as his providence has put an opportunity into our hands of ſo doing;—provided that no plea drawn from the neceſſary attentions to the affairs of the world, which many mens ſituations oblige them to, may be ſuppoſed to extend to an exemption from paying their morning and evening ſacrifice to GOD.—For it ſeems to be the leaſt that can be done to anſwer the demand of our duty in this point,—ſucceſſively to open and ſhut up the day in prayer and thankſgiving;—ſince there is not a morning thou riſeſt, or a night thou lieſt down, but thou art indebted for it to the watchful providence of Almighty GOD.—David and Daniel, whoſe names are recorded in Scripture for future example,—the firſt, though a mighty king, embarraſſed with wars abroad, and unnatural diſturbances at home; a ſituation, one would think, would allow little time for any thing but his own and his kingdom's ſafety;—yet found he leiſure to pray *ſeven times* a day:—the latter, the counſellor and firſt miniſter of ſtate to the great Nebuchadnezzar; and, though perpetually fatigued with the affairs of a mighty kingdom, and the government of the whole province of Babylon, which was committed to his adminiſtration;—though near the perſon of an idolatrous king, and amidſt the temptations of a luxurious court,—yet never ne-

glected he his GOD; but, as we read,—he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before him.

A frequent correſpondence with heaven, by prayer and devotion, is the greateſt nouriſhment and ſupport of ſpiritual life:—it keeps the ſenſe of a GOD warm and lively within us,—which ſecures our diſpoſition, and ſets ſuch guards over us, that hardly will a temptation prevail againſt us. Who can entertain a baſe or an impure thought, or think of executing it, who is inceſſantly converſing with his GOD?—or not deſpiſe every temptation this lower world can offer him, when, by his conſtant addreſſes before the throne of GOD's majeſty, he brings the glorious proſpect of heaven perpetually before his eyes?

I cannot help here taking notice of the doctrine of thoſe who would reſolve all devotion into the inner man, and think that there is nothing more requiſite to expreſs our reverence to GOD, but purity and integrity of heart,—unaccompanied either with words or actions.—To this opinion, it may be juſtly anſwered,—That, in the preſent ſtate we are in, we find ſuch a ſtrong ſympathy and union between our ſouls and bodies, that the one cannot be touched, or ſenſibly affected, without producing ſome correſponding emotion in the other.—Nature has aſſigned a different look, tone of voice, and geſture, peculiar to every paſſion and affection we are ſubject to

and therefore, to argue againſt this ſtrict correſpondence which is held between our ſouls and bodies,—is diſputing againſt the frame and mechaniſm of human nature.—We are not angels, but men clothed with bodies, and, in ſome meaſure, ſo governed by our imaginations, that we have need of all theſe external helps which nature has made the interpreters of our thoughts.—And, no doubt, though a virtuous and a good life is more acceptable in the ſight of GOD, than either prayer or thankſgiving;—for, behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;—nevertheleſs, as the one ought to be done, ſo the other ought not, by any means, to be left undone.—As GOD is to be obeyed,—ſo he is to be worſhipped alſo.—For, although inward holineſs and integrity of heart is the ultimate end of the divine diſpenſations;—yet external religion is a certain means of promoting it.—Each of them has its juſt bounds; and therefore, as we would not be ſo carnal as merely to reſt contented with the one,—ſo neither can we pretend to be ſo ſpiritual as to neglect the other.

And though GOD is all-wiſe, and therefore underſtands our thoughts afar off,—and knows the exact degrees of our love and reverence to him, though we ſhould withhold theſe outward marks of it;—yet GOD himſelf has been graciouſly pleaſed to command us to pray to him;—that we might beg the af-

ſiſtance of his grace to work with us againſt our infirmities;—that we might acknowledge him to be, what he is, the ſupreme LORD of the whole world;—that we might teſtify the ſenſe we have of all his mercies and loving-kindneſs to us,—and confeſs that he has the propriety of every thing we enjoy;—that the earth is the LORD's, and the fulneſs thereof.

Thus much of this duty of prayer in general.—From every individual, it may be reaſonably expected, from a bare reflection upon his own ſtation, his perſonal wants, and the daily bleſſings which he has received in particular;—but, for thoſe bleſſings beſtowed upon the whole ſpecies in common,—reaſon ſeems farther to require, that a joint return ſhould be made by as many of the ſpecies as can conveniently aſſemble together for this religious purpoſe.—From hence ariſes, likewiſe, the reaſonableneſs of public worſhip, and ſacred places ſet apart for that purpoſe; without which, it would be very difficult to preſerve that ſenſe of GOD and religion upon the minds of men, which is ſo neceſſary to their well-being, conſidered only as a civil ſociety, and with regard to the purpoſes of this life, and the influence which a juſt ſenſe of it muſt have upon their actions. Beſides, men who are united in ſocieties, can have no other cement to unite them likewiſe in religious ties, as well as in manners of worſhip and points of faith, but the inſtitution of ſolemn times, and and public places, deſtined for that uſe.

And it is not to be queſtioned, that if the time, as well as the place, for ſerving GOD, were once conſidered as indifferent, and left ſo far to every man's choice, as to have no calls to public prayer, however a ſenſe of religion might be preſerved a while by a few ſpeculative men, yet, that the bulk of mankind would loſe all knowledge of it, and, in time, live without GOD in the world.—Not that private prayer is the leſs our duty, the contrary of which is proved above; and our SAVIOUR ſays, That when we pray to GOD in ſecret, we ſhall be rewarded openly:—but that prayers which are publicly offered up in GOD's houſe, tend more to the glory of GOD, and the benefit of ourſelves,—for this reaſon, that they are preſumed to be performed with greater attention and ſeriouſneſs, and therefore moſt likely to be heard with a more favourable acceptance. And for this, one might appeal to every man's breaſt, whether he has not been affected with the moſt elevated pitch of devotion, when he gave thanks in the great congregation of the ſaints, and praiſed GOD amongſt much people?—Of this united worſhip, there is a glorious deſcription which St JOHN gives us in the Revelation, where he ſuppoſes the whole univerſe joining together, in their ſeveral capacities, to give glory in this manner to their common LORD.—Every creature which was in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as were in the

ſeas, and all that were in them, heard I, crying,—Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that ſitteth upon the throne.

But here it may be aſked, that if public worſhip tends ſo much to promote the glory of GOD,—and is ſo indiſpenſably the duty and benefit of every Chriſtian ſtate,—how came it to paſs, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR left no command to his followers, throughout the goſpel, to ſet up public places of worſhip, and keep them ſacred for that purpoſe? —It may be anſwered,—That the neceſſity of ſetting apart places for divine worſhip, and the holineſs of them, when thus ſet apart, ſeemed already to have been ſo well eſtabliſhed by former revelation, as not to need any expreſs precept upon that ſubject:—for, though the particular appointment of the temple, and the confinement of worſhip to that place alone, were only temporary parts of the Jewiſh covenant; yet the neceſſity and duty of having places ſomewhere ſolemnly dedicated to GOD, carried a moral reaſon with it, and therefore was not aboliſhed with the ceremonial part of the law.—Our SAVIOUR came, not to deſtroy, but to fulfil the law;—and therefore, the moral precepts of it, which promoted a due regard to the divine Majeſty, remained in as full force as ever.—And accordingly, we find it atteſted, both by Chriſtian and Heathen writers, that ſo ſoon as the

ſecond century, when the number of believers was much increaſed, and the circumſtances of rich converts enabled them to do it,—that they began to erect edifices for divine worſhip;—and, though under the frowns and oppreſſion of the civil power, they every Sabbath aſſembled themſelves therein, that, with one heart and one lip, they might declare whoſe they were, and whom they ſerved, and, as the ſervants of one LORD, might offer up their joint prayers and petitions.

I wiſh there was no reaſon to lament an abatement of this religious zeal amongſt Chriſtians of later days.—Though the piety of our forefathers ſeems, in a great meaſure, to have deprived us of the merit of building churches for the ſervice of GOD, there can be no ſuch plea for not frequenting them in a regular and ſolemn manner.—How often do people abſent themſelves (when in the utmoſt diſtreſs how to diſpoſe of themſelves) from church, even upon thoſe days which are ſet apart for nothing elſe but the worſhip of GOD;—when, to trifle that day away, or apply any portion of it to ſecular concerns, is a ſacrilege almoſt in the literal ſenſe of the word!

From this duty of public prayer ariſes another, which I cannot help ſpeaking of, it being ſo dependent upon it;—I mean, a ſerious, devout, and reſpectful behaviour, when we are performing this ſolemn duty in the houſe of GOD.—This is ſurely the leaſt that

can be neceſſary in the immediate preſence of the Sovereign of the world, upon whoſe acceptance of our addreſſes, all our preſent and future happineſs depends.

Reſpectful external behaviour is the reſult of inward reverence, and is therefore part of our duty to GOD, whom we are to worſhip in body as well as ſpirit.

And as no one ſhould be wanting in outward reſpect and decorum, before an earthly prince or ſuperior, much leſs ſhould we be ſo before Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Notwithſtanding the obviouſneſs of this branch of duty,—it ſeems often to be little underſtood; and whoever will take a general ſurvey of church behaviour, will often meet with ſcenes of ſad variety.—What a vein of indolence and indevotion ſometimes ſeems to run throughout whole congregations!—what ill-timed pains do ſome take in putting on an air of gaiety and indifference in the moſt intereſting parts of this duty, even when they are making confeſſion of their ſins,—as if they were aſhamed to be thought ſerious with their GOD!—Surely, to addreſs ourſelves to his infinite Majeſty after a negligent and diſpaſſionate manner, beſides the immediate indignity offered, it is a ſad ſign we little conſider the bleſſings we aſk for; and far leſs deſerve them. Beſides, what is a prayer, unleſs our hearts and affections go along with it?—It is

not ſo much as the ſhadow of devotion; and little better than the papiſts telling their beads, —or honouring GOD with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. The conſideration that a perſon is come to proſtrate himſelf before the throne of high Heaven, and in that place which is particularly diſtinguiſhed by his preſence, is ſufficient inducement for any one to watch over his imagination, and guard againſt the leaſt appearance of levity and diſreſpect.

An inward ſincerity will of courſe influence the outward deportment; but where the one is wanting, there is great reaſon to ſuſpect the abſence of the other. I own it is poſſible, and often happens, that this external garb of religion may be worn, when there is little within of a piece with it;—but I believe the converſe of the propoſition can never happen to be true, that a truly religious frame of mind ſhould exiſt without ſome outward mark of it. The mind will ſhine through the veil of fleſh which covers it, and naturally expreſs its religious diſpoſitions; and, if it poſſeſſes the power of godlineſs,—will have the external form of it too.

May GOD grant us to be defective in neither, but that we may ſo praiſe and magnify GOD on earth,—that when he cometh, at the laſt day, with ten thouſand of his ſaints in heaven, to judge the world, we may be partakers of their eternal inheritance. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIV.

THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE JUSTIFIED TO MAN.

PSALM lxxiii. 12, 13.—*Behold, theſe are the ungodly who proſper in the world, they increaſe in riches.*

Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.

THIS complaint of the Pſalmiſt, concerning the promiſcuous diſtribution of GOD's bleſſings to the juſt and the unjuſt, —that the ſun ſhould ſhine without diſtinction upon the good and the bad,—and rains deſcend upon the righteous and unrighteous man,—is a ſubject that has afforded much matter for inquiry, and at one time or other has raiſed doubts to diſhearten and perplex the minds of men. If the Sovereign LORD of all the earth does look on, whence ſo much diſorder in the face of things?—why is it permitted, that wiſe and good men ſhould be left often a prey to ſo many miſeries and diſtreſſes of life,—whilſt the guilty and fooliſh triumph in their offences, and even the tabernacles of robbers proſper?

To this it is anſwered,—That therefore there is a future ſtate of rewards and puniſh-

ments to take place after this life,—wherein all theſe inequalities ſhall be made even, where the circumſtances of every man's caſe ſhall be conſidered, and where GOD ſhall be juſtified in all his ways, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopt.

If this was not ſo,—if the ungodly were to proſper in the world, and have riches in poſſeſſion,—and no diſtinction to be made hereafter, to what purpoſe would it have been to have maintained our integrity?—Lo! then, indeed, ſhould I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.

It is farther ſaid, and what is a more direct anſwer to the point,—that when GOD created man, that he might make him capable of receiving happineſs at his hands hereafter,—he endowed him with liberty and freedom of choice, without which he could not have been a creature accountable for his actions;—that it is merely from the bad uſe he makes of theſe gifts,—that all thoſe inſtances of irregularity do reſult, upon which the complaint is here grounded,—which could nowiſe be prevented, but by the total ſubverſion of human liberty;—that ſhould GOD make bare his arm, and interpoſe on every injuſtice that is committed,—mankind might be ſaid to do what was right,—but, at the ſame time, to loſe the merit of it, ſince they would act under force and neceſſity, and not from the determinations of their own mind;—that, upon this ſuppoſition,—a man could with no more

reaſon expect to go to heaven for acts of temperance, juſtice and humanity, than for the ordinary impulſes of hunger and thirſt, which nature directed;—that GOD has dealt with man upon better terms;—he has firſt endowed him with liberty and free-will;—he has ſet life and death, good and evil, before him;—that he has given him faculties to find out what will be the conſequences of either way of acting, and then left him to take which courſe his reaſon and diſcretion ſhall point out.

I ſhall deſiſt from enlarging any farther upon either of the foregoing arguments in vindication of GOD's providence, which are urged ſo often with ſo much force and conviction, as to leave no room for a reaſonable reply;—ſince the miſeries which befal the good, and the ſeeming happineſs of the wicked, could not be otherwiſe in ſuch a free ſtate and condition as this in which we are placed.

In all charges of this kind, we generally take two things for granted;—1ſt, That in the inſtances we give, we know certainly the good from the bad;—and, 2dly, The reſpective ſtate of their enjoyments or ſufferings.

I ſhall therefore, in the remaining part of my diſcourſe, take up your time with a ſhort inquiry into the difficulties of coming, not only at the true characters of men,—but likewiſe of knowing the degrees either of their real happineſs or miſery in this life.

The first of these will teach us candour in our judgments of others;—the second, to which I shall confine myself, will teach us humility in our reasonings upon the ways of GOD.

For though the miseries of the good, and the prosperity of the wicked, are not in general to be denied;—yet I shall endeavour to show, that the particular instances we are apt to produce, when we cry out in the words of the Psalmist, Lo! these are the ungodly,—these prosper and are happy in the world;—I say, I shall endeavour to show, that we are so ignorant of the articles of the charge,—and the evidence we go upon to make them good, is so lame and defective,—as to be sufficient by itself to check all propensity to expostulate with GOD's providence, allowing there was no other way of clearing up the matter reconcileably to his attributes.

And, first,—what certain and infallible marks have we of the goodness or badness of the bulk of mankind?

If we trust to fame and reports,—if they are good, how do we know but they may proceed from partial friendship or flattery?—when bad, from envy or malice, from ill-natured surmises and constructions of things?—and, on both sides, from small matters aggrandized through mistake,—and sometimes through the unskilful relation of even truth itself?—From some, or all of which causes,

it happens, that the characters of men, like the hiſtories of the Egyptians, are to be received and read with caution;—they are generally dreſſed out and disfigured with ſo many dreams and fables, that every ordinary reader ſhall not be able to diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood.—But allowing theſe reflections to be too ſevere in this matter,—that no ſuch thing as envy ever leſſened a man's character, or malice blackened it;—yet the characters of men are not eaſily penetrated, as they depend often upon the retired, unſeen parts of a man's life.—The beſt and trueſt piety is moſt ſecret; and the worſt of actions, for different reaſons, will be ſo too.—Some men are modeſt, and ſeem to take pains to hide their virtues; and, from a natural diſtance and reſerve in their tempers, ſcarce ſuffer their good qualities to be known:—others, on the contrary, put in practice a thouſand little arts to counterfeit virtues which they have not,—the better to conceal thoſe vices which they really have;—and this under fair ſhows of ſanctity, good-nature, generoſity, or ſome virtue or other,—too ſpecious to be ſeen through—too amiable and diſintereſted to be ſuſpected. Theſe hints may be ſufficient to ſhow how hard it is to come at the matter of fact:—but one may go a ſtep farther,—and ſay, that even that, in many caſes, could we come to the knowledge of it, is not ſufficient by itſelf to pronounce a man either good or

bad.—There are numbers of circumſtances, which attend every action of a man's life, which can never come to the knowledge of the world,—yet ought to be known, and well weighed, before ſentence with any juſtice can be paſſed upon him.—A man may have different views, and a different ſenſe of things from what his judges have; and what he underſtands and feels, and what paſſes within him, may be a ſecret treaſured up deeply there for ever.—A man, through bodily infirmity, or ſome complexional defect, which perhaps is not in his power to correct,—may be ſubject to inadvertencies—to ſtarts—and unhappy turns of temper; he may ly open to ſnares he is not always aware of; or, through ignorance and want of information and proper helps, he may labour in the dark: —in all which caſes, he may do many things which are wrong in themſelves, and yet be innocent;—at leaſt an object rather to be pitied, than cenſured with ſeverity and ill-will. Theſe are difficulties which ſtand in every one's way, in the forming a judgment of the characters of others. But, for once, let us ſuppoſe them all to be got over, ſo that we could ſee the bottom of every man's heart;—let us allow that the word rogue, or honeſt man, was wrote ſo legibly in every man's face, that no one could poſſibly miſtake it; —yet ſtill the happineſs of both the one and the other, which is the only fact that can

bring the charge home, is what we have ſo little certain knowledge of,—that, bating ſome flagrant inſtances,—whenever we venture to pronounce upon it, our deciſions are little more than random gueſſes.—For, who can ſearch the heart of man?—it is treacherous even to ourſelves, and much more likely to impoſe upon others. Even in laughter (if you will believe Solomon) the heart is ſorrowful;—*the mind ſits drooping, whilſt the countenance is gay*;—and even he, who is the object of envy to thoſe who look no farther than to the ſurface of his eſtate,—may appear at the ſame time worthy of compaſſion to thoſe who know his private receſſes. Beſides this, a man's unhappineſs is not to be aſcertained ſo much from what is known to have befallen him,—as from his particular turn and caſt of mind, and capacity of bearing it.—Poverty, exile, loſs of fame or friends, the death of children, the deareſt of all pledges of a man's happineſs, make not equal impreſſions upon every temper. You will ſee one man undergo, with ſcarce the expence of a ſigh,—what another, in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, would go mourning for all his life long: —nay, a haſty word, or an unkind look, to a ſoft and tender nature, will ſtrike deeper than a ſword to the hardened and ſenſeleſs.—If theſe reflections hold true with regard to misfortunes,—they are the ſame with regard to enjoyments: we are formed differently—

have different taſtes and perceptions of things:—by the force of habit, education, or a particular caſt of mind—it happens, that neither the uſe or poſſeſſion of the ſame enjoyments and advantages, produce the ſame happineſs and contentment;—but that it differs in every man almoſt according to his temper and complexion:—ſo that the ſelf-ſame happy accidents in life, which ſhall give raptures to the choleric or ſanguine man, ſhall be received with indifference by the cold and phlegmatic;—and ſo oddly perplexed are the accounts of both human happineſs and miſery in this world,—that trifles, light as air, ſhall be able to make the hearts of ſome men ſing for joy;—at the ſame time that others, with real bleſſings and advantages, without the power of uſing them, have their hearts heavy and diſcontented.

Alas! if the principles of contentment are not within us,—the height of ſtation and worldly grandeur, will as ſoon add a cubit to a man's ſtature, as to his happineſs.

This will ſuggeſt to us how little a way we have gone towards the proof of any man's happineſs,—in barely ſaying,—Lo! this man proſpers in the world,—and this man has riches in poſſeſſion.

When a man has got much above us, we take it for granted—that he ſees ſome glorious proſpects, and feels ſome mighty pleaſures from his height;—whereas, could we

get up to him—it is great odds whether we ſhould find any thing to make us tolerable amends for the pains and trouble of climbing up ſo high.—Nothing, perhaps, but more dangers and more troubles ſtill;—and ſuch a giddineſs of head beſides, as to make a wiſe man wiſh he was well down again upon the level. To calculate, therefore, the happineſs of mankind by their ſtations and honours, is the moſt deceitful of all rules.—Great, no doubt, is the happineſs which a moderate fortune, and moderate deſires, with a conſciouſneſs of virtue, will ſecure a man.—Many are the ſilent pleaſures of the honeſt peaſant, who riſes cheerfully to his labour.—Look into his dwelling—where the ſcene of every man's happineſs chiefly lies,—he has the ſame domeſtic endearments—as much joy and comfort in his children—and as flattering hopes of their doing well—to enliven his hours and glad his heart, as you could conceive in the moſt affluent ſtation;—and I make no doubt, in general, but if the true account of his joys and ſufferings were to be balanced with thoſe of his betters—that the upſhot would prove to be little more than this,—that the rich man had the more meat—but the poor man the better ſtomach;—the one had more luxury—more able phyſicians to attend and ſet him to rights;—the other more health and ſoundneſs in his bones, and leſs occaſion for their help;—that, after theſe two articles be-

twixt them were balanced,—in all other things they ſtood upon a level;—that the ſun ſhines as warm—the air blows as freſh—and the earth breathes as fragrant, upon the one as the other;—and that they have an equal ſhare in all the beauties and real benefits of nature.—Theſe hints may be ſufficient to ſhow, what I propoſed from them,—the difficulties which attend us in judging truly either of the happineſs or the miſery of the bulk of mankind,—the evidence being ſtill more defective in this caſe (as the matter of fact is hard to come at)—than even in that of judging of their true characters; of both which, in general, we have ſuch imperfect knowledge, as will teach us candour in our determinations upon each other.

But the main purport of this diſcourſe is, to teach us humility in our reaſonings upon the ways of the ALMIGHTY.

That things are dealt unequally in this world, is one of the ſtrongeſt natural arguments for a future ſtate,—and therefore is not to be overthrown: nevertheleſs, I am perſuaded the charge is far from being as great as at firſt ſight it may appear;—or, if it is—that our views of things are ſo narrow and confined, that it is not in our power to make it good.

But ſuppoſe it otherwiſe;—that the happineſs and proſperity of bad men were as great as our general complaints make them,—and,

what is not the caſe,—that we were not able to clear up the matter, or anſwer it reconcileably with GOD's juſtice and providence;—what ſhall we infer?—Why, the moſt becoming concluſion is,—that it is one inſtance more, out of many others, of our ignorance.—Why ſhould this, or any other religious difficulty he cannot comprehend,—why ſhould it alarm him more than ten thouſand other difficulties, which every day elude his moſt exact and attentive ſearch?—Does not the meaneſt flower in the field, or the ſmalleſt blade of graſs, baffle the underſtanding of the moſt penetrating mind?—Can the deepeſt inquirers after nature tell us, upon what particular ſize and motion of parts, the various colours and taſtes of vegetables depend;—why one ſhrub is laxative—another aſtringent;—why arſenic or hellebore ſhould lay waſte this noble frame of ours, or opium lock up all the inroads to our ſenſes,—and plunder us, in ſo mercileſs a manner, of reaſon and underſtanding?—Nay, have not the moſt obvious things that come in our way, dark ſides, which the quickeſt ſight cannot penetrate into? and do not the cleareſt and moſt exalted underſtandings find themſelves puzzled, and at a loſs, in every particle of matter?

Go then—proud man!—and when thy head turns giddy with opinions of thy own wiſdom, that thou wouldſt correct the meaſures of the ALMIGHTY—Go then,—take a full view of thyſelf in this glaſs:—conſider

thy own facuties,—how narrow and imperfect;—how much they are chequered with truth and falſehood;—how little arrives at thy knowledge, and how darkly and confuſedly thou diſcerneſt even that little, as in a glaſs:—conſider the beginnings and endings of things, the greateſt and the ſmalleſt, how they all conſpire to baffle thee;—and which way ever thou proſecuteſt thy inquiries,—what freſh ſubjects of amazement,—and what freſh reaſons to believe there are more yet behind, which thou canſt never comprehend.—Conſider—theſe are but a part of his ways.—How little a portion is heard of him! Canſt thou, by ſearching, find out GOD?—wouldſt thou know the Almighty to perfection?—It is high as heaven, what canſt thou do?—it is deeper than hell, how canſt thou know it?

Could we but ſee the myſterious workings of Providence, and were we able to comprehend the whole plan of his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, which poſſibly may be the caſe in the final conſummation of all things;—thoſe events, which we are now ſo perplexed to account for, would probably exalt and magnify his wiſdom, and make us cry out with the apoſtle, in that rapturous exclamation,—O! the depth of the riches both of the goodneſs and wiſdom of GOD!—how unſearchable are his ways, and his paths paſt finding out!

Now, to GOD, &c.

SERMON XLV.

THE INGRATITUDE OF ISRAEL.

2 KINGS xvii. 7.—*For ſo it was,—that the children of Iſrael had ſinned againſt the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.*

THE words of the text account for the cauſe of a ſad calamity, which is related, in the foregoing verſes, to have befallen a great number of Iſraelites, who were ſurpriſed in the capital city of Samaria, by Hoſea king of Aſſyria, and cruelly carried away by him out of their own country, and placed on the deſolate frontiers of Halah, and in Haber, by the river Gozan, and in the city of the Medes, and there confined to end their days in ſorrow and captivity.—Upon which the ſacred hiſtorian, inſtead of accounting for ſo ſad an event merely from political ſprings and cauſes; ſuch, for inſtance, as the ſuperior ſtrength and policy of the enemy—or an unſeaſonable provocation given—or that proper meaſures of defence were neglected;—he traces it up, in one word, to its true cauſe:—For ſo it was, ſays he, that the

children of Iſrael had ſinned againſt the LORD their GOD, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt —It was ſurely a ſufficient foundation to dread ſome evil,—that they had ſinned againſt that Being who had an unqueſtionable right to their obedience.—But, what an aggravation was it, that they had not only ſinned ſimply againſt the truth, but againſt the GOD of mercies,—who had brought them forth out of the land of Egypt ;—who not only created, upheld, and favoured them with ſo many advantages in common with the reſt of their fellow-creatures,—but who had been particularly kind to them in their misfortunes ; —who, when they were in the houſe of bondage, in the moſt hopeleſs condition, without a proſpect of any natural means of redreſs, had compaſſionately heard their cry, and took pity upon the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people,—and, by a chain of miracles, delivered them from ſervitude and oppreſſion ;—miracles of ſo ſtupendous a nature, that I take delight to offer them, as often as I have an opportunity, to your devouteſt contemplations !— This, you would think, as high and as complicated an aggravation of their ſins as could be urged.—This was not all ;—for, beſides GOD's goodneſs, in firſt favouring their miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes, not to be accounted for from ſecond cauſes, and the natural courſe of events, had crowned their heads in ſo remarkable a manner, as to afford

an evident proof, not only of his general concern for their welfare, but of his particular providence and attachment to them above all people upon the earth.—In the wilderneſs he led them like ſheep,—and kept them as the apple of his eye:—he ſuffered no man to do them wrong, but reproved even kings for their ſake.—When they entered into the promiſed land,—no force was able to ſtand before them;—when in poſſeſſion of it,—no army was able to drive them out;—and, in a word, nature, for a time, was driven backwards to ſerve them; and even the ſun itſelf had ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven to ſecure their victories.

A people with ſo many teſtimonies of GOD's favour, who had not profited thereby ſo as to become a virtuous people, muſt have been utterly corrupt;—and ſo they were.—And it is likely, from the many ſpecimens they have given, in Moſes's time, of a diſpoſition to forget GOD's benefits, and, upon every trial, to rebel againſt him,—he foreſaw they would certainly prove a thankleſs and unthinking people, extremely inclined to go aſtray and do evil;—and therefore, if any thing was likely to bring them back to themſelves, and to conſider the evils of their miſdoings,—it muſt be the dread of ſome temporal calamity, which, he prophetically threatened, would one day or other befal them:—hoping, no doubt,—that if no principle of

gratitude could make them an obedient people,—at leaſt they might be wrought upon by the terror of being reduced back again by the ſame all-powerful hand to their firſt diſtreſſed condition;—which, in the end, did actually overtake them.—For, at length, when neither the alternatives of promiſes or threatenings,—when neither rewards or corrections—comforts or afflictions, could ſoften them; when continual inſtructions—warnings—invitations——reproofs——miracles—prophets and holy guides, had no effect, but, inſtead of making them grow better, apparently made them grow worſe,—GOD's patience at length withdrew,—and he ſuffered them to reap the wages of their folly, by letting them fall into the ſtate of bondage from whence he had firſt raiſed them;—and that not only in that partial inſtance of thoſe in Samaria, who were taken by Hoſea,—but, I mean, in that more general inſtance of their overthrow by the army of the Chaldeans—wherein he ſuffered the whole nation to be led away, and carried captive into Nineveh and Babylon.——We may be aſſured, that the hiſtory of GOD ALMIGHTY's juſt dealings with this froward and thoughtleſs people—was not wrote for nothing; but that it was given as a loud call and warning of obedience and gratitude, for all races of men to whom the light of revelation ſhould hereafter reach:——and therefore, I have made choice of this ſubject, as it ſeems

likely to furniſh ſome reflections ſeaſonable for the beginning of this week, which ſhould be devoted to ſuch meditations as may prepare and fit us for the ſolemn faſt which we are ſhortly to obſerve, and whoſe pious intention will not be anſwered by a bare aſſembling ourſelves together, without making ſome religious and national remarks ſuitable to the occaſion.—Doubtleſs, there is no nation which ever had ſo many extraordinary reaſons and ſupernatural motives to become thankful and virtuous, as the Jews had;—which, beſides the daily bleſſings of GOD's providence to them, has not received ſufficient bleſſings and mercies at the hands of GOD, ſo as to engage their beſt ſervices, and the warmeſt returns of gratitude they can pay.

There has been a time, may be, when they have been delivered from ſome grievous calamity—from the rage of peſtilence or famine—from the edge and fury of the ſword—from the fate and fall of kingdoms round them;—they may have been preſerved by providential diſcoveries of plots and deſigns againſt the well-being of their ſtates, or by critical turns and revolutions in their favour, when beginning to ſink.—By ſome ſignal interpoſition of GOD's providence, they may have refcued their liberties, and all that was dear to them, from the jaws of ſome tyrant;—or may have preſerved their religion pure and uncorrupted, when all other comforts

failed them.—If other countries have reaſon to be thankful to GOD, for any one of theſe mercies,—much more has this of ours,—which at one time or other has received them all;—inſomuch, that our hiſtory, for this laſt hundred years, has ſcarce been any thing but the hiſtory of our deliverances and GOD's bleſſings;—and theſe in ſo complicated a chain, ſuch as were ſcarce ever vouchſafed to any people beſides, except the Jews;—and with regard to them, though inferior in the ſtupendous manner of their working,—yet no way ſo—in the extenſive goodneſs of their effects, and the infinite benevolence and power which muſt have wrought them for us.

Here, then, let us ſtop to look back a moment, and inquire what great effects all this has had upon our ſins, and how far worthy we have lived of what we have received.

A ſtranger, when he heard that this iſland had been ſo favoured by heaven,—ſo happy in our laws and religion,—ſo flouriſhing in our trade,—and ſo bleſſed in our ſituation,—and ſo viſibly protected in all of them by Providence,—would conclude, that our morals had kept pace with theſe bleſſings, and would expect, that, as we were the moſt favoured by GOD ALMIGHTY, we muſt be the moſt virtuous and religious people upon earth.

Would to GOD, there was any other reaſon to incline one to ſuch a belief!—would to GOD, that the appearance of religion was

more frequent! for that would neceſſarily imply the reality of it ſomewhere, and moſt probably in the greateſt and moſt reſpectable characters of the nation.—Such was the ſituation of this country, till a licentious king introduced a licentious age.—The Court of Charles the Second firſt brake in upon, and, I fear, has almoſt demoliſhed the outworks of religion, of modeſty, and of ſober manners; —ſo that, inſtead of any real marks of religion amongſt us, you ſee thouſands who are tired with carrying the maſk of it,—and have thrown it aſide as a uſeleſs incumbrance.

But this licentiouſneſs, he will ſay, may be chiefly owing to a long courſe of proſperity, which is apt to corrupt men's minds.—GOD has ſince tried you with afflictions; you have had lately a bloody and expenſive war; GOD has ſent, moreover, a peſtilence amongſt your cattle, which has cut off the flock from the fold, and left no herd in the ſtalls;—beſides, you have juſt felt two dreadful ſhocks in your metropolis, of a moſt terrifying nature;—which, if GOD's providence had not checked and reſtrained within ſome bounds, might have overthrown your capital, and your kingdom with it.

Surely, he will ſay, all theſe warnings muſt have awakened the conſciences of the moſt unthinking part of you, and forced the inhabitants of your land, from ſuch admonitions, to have learned righteouſneſs.—I own, this

is the natural effect, and, one would hope, ſhould always be the improvement from ſuch calamities; for we often find, that numbers of people, who, in their proſperity, ſeemed to forget GOD,—do yet remember him in the days of trouble and diſtreſs:—yet, conſider this nationally,—we ſee no ſuch effect from it, as, in fact, one would expect from ſpeculation.

For inſtance, with all the devaſtation and bloodſhed which the war has occaſioned, how many converts has it made either to virtue or frugality? The peſtilence amongſt our cattle, though it has diſtreſſed, and utterly undone ſo many thouſands, yet what one viſible alteration has it made in the courſe of our lives?

And though one would imagine, that the neceſſary drains of taxes for the one,—and the loſs of rent and property from the other,—ſhould, in ſome meaſure, have withdrawn the means of gratifying our paſſions as we have done;—yet, what appearance is there amongſt us that it is ſo?—what one faſhionable folly or extravagance has been checked?—Are not the ſame expences of equipage, and furniture, and dreſs,—the ſame order of diverſions, perpetually returning, and as great luxury and epicuriſm of entertainments, as in the moſt proſperous condition?—So that, though the head is ſick, and the whole heart

is faint, we all affect to look well in the face, either as if nothing had happened, or we were aſhamed to acknowledge the force and natural effects of the chaſtiſements of GOD.—And if, from the effects which war and peſtilence have had,—we may form a judgment of the moral effects which this laſt terror is likely to produce,—it is to be feared, however we might be ſtartled at firſt,—that the impreſſions will ſcarce laſt longer than the inſtantaneous ſhock which occaſioned them.—And I make no doubt—ſhould a man have courage to declare his opinion—"That he believed it "was an indication of GOD's anger upon a "corrupt generation,"—that it would be great odds, but he would be pitied for his weakneſs, or openly laughed at for his ſuperſtition. Or if, after ſuch a declaration,—he was thought worth ſetting right in his miſtake,—he would be informed—that religion had nothing to do in explications of this kind;—that all ſuch violent vibrations of the earth, were owing to ſubterraneous caverns falling down of themſelves, or being blown up by nitrous and ſulphureous vapours, rarefied by heat;—and that it was idle to bring in the Deity to untie the knot, when it can be reſolved eaſily into natural cauſes.——Vain, unthinking mortals!—As if natural cauſes were any thing elſe in the hands of GOD,—but inſtruments, which he can turn to work

the purpoſes of his will, either to reward or puniſh, as ſeems fitting to his infinite wiſdom.

Thus no man repenteth him of his wickedneſs, ſaying,—What have I done?—but every one turneth to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battle.——To conclude, however we may underrate it now—it is a maxim of eternal truth—which both reaſonings and all accounts from hiſtory confirm—That the wickedneſs and corruption of a people will ſooner or later always bring on temporal miſchiefs and calamities.—And, can it be otherwiſe?—for a vicious nation not only carries the ſeeds of deſtruction within, from the natural workings and courſe of things,—but it lays itſelf open to the whole force and injury of accidents from without;—and I do venture to ſay,—there never was a nation or people fallen into troubles or decay,—but one might juſtly leave the ſame remark upon them, which the ſacred hiſtorian makes in the text, upon the misfortunes of the Iſraelites,—for ſo it was,—that they had ſinned againſt the LORD their GOD.

Let us, therefore, conſtantly bear in mind, that concluſion of the ſacred writer—which I ſhall give you in his own beautiful and awful language:—"But the LORD, who brought "you up out of the land of Egypt, with "great power and a ſtretched out arm, him "ſhall ye fear, and him ſhall ye worſhip, and "to him ſhall ye do ſacrifice:—And the ſta-

" tutes, and the ordinances, and the com-
" mandments he wrote for you, ye ſhall ob-
" ſerve to do for evermore. The LORD your
" GOD ye ſhall fear,—and he ſhall deliver you
" out of the hand of all your enemies."

Now, to GOD the Father, &c.

FINIS.